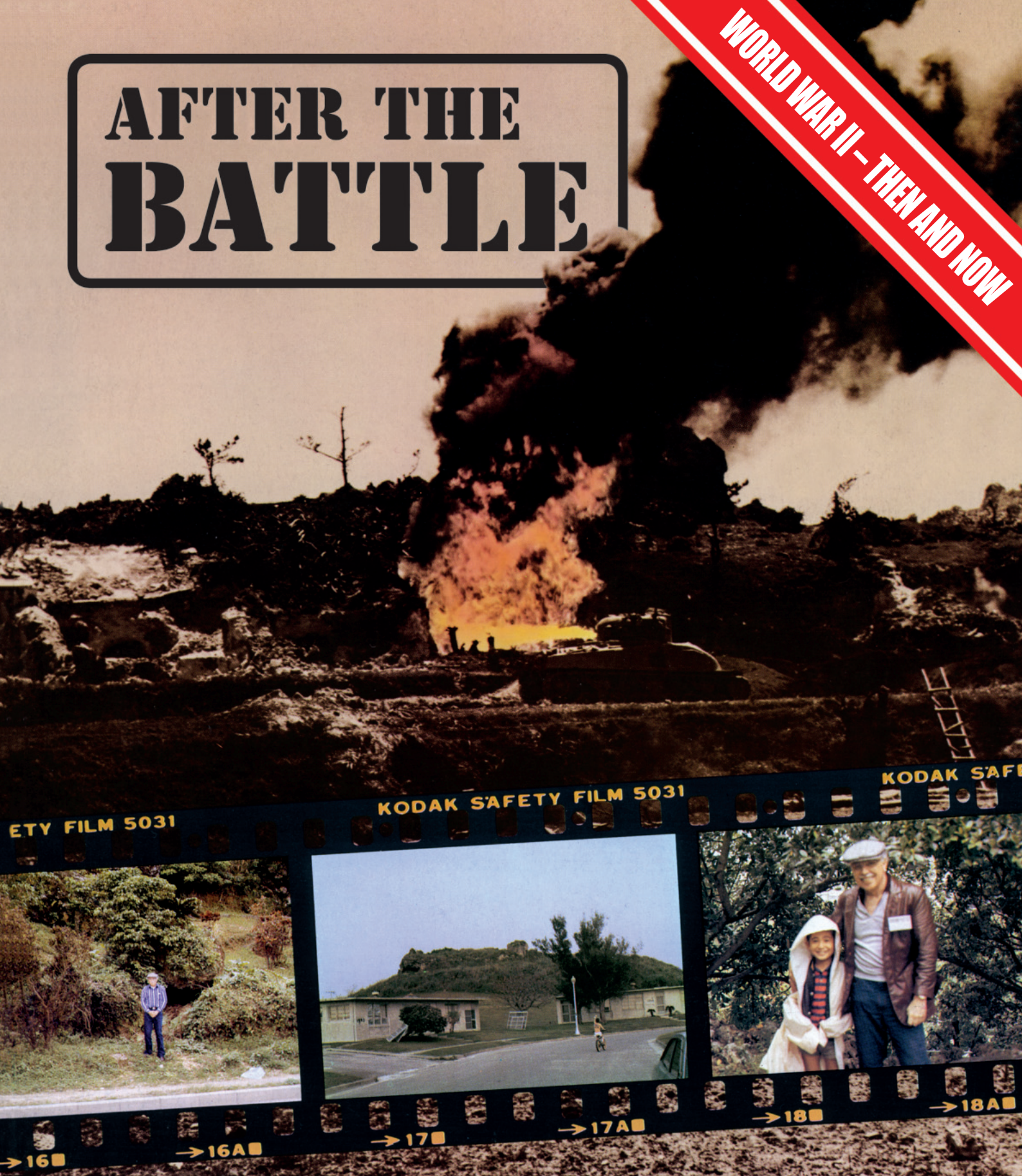
AFTER THE BATTLE

WORLD WAR II – THEN AND NOW



OKINAWA

A MARINE RETURNS

Number 43

AFTER THE BATTLE

NUMBER 43

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Front Cover: Charlie Hill was named after C (Charlie) Company of the 1st Battalion, 22nd Marine Regiment — more usually just referred to as the 22nd Marines — of the 6th Division which lost 35 killed and wounded during its capture. (See also page 10.)

Insets: An ex-Marine returns on a nostalgic visit. Charlie Hill today forms part of a US military housing estate. Charles Leonard is also pictured in front of one of the few caves not now sealed as tombs on Hill 69 and with a young friend on the southern end of the hill at the site of the ancient ruins of Nanzan Castle.

Centre pages: The American commander, Lieutenant General Simon Bolivar Buckner, was killed beside this boulder, now removed from its original position on Mezado Ridge and erected beside a memorial at the Foster Marine Base. The base was named after Pfc. William A. Foster who gave his life to save that of another Marine by diving on a grenade and absorbing the blast with his body. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

Back Cover: Honour of a different kind at Mabuni. The marker on the tomb of the Japanese commander, Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima who took his own life when the battle was lost.

Contemporary photographs throughout this issue are from US Army, Signal Corps and Marine Corps archives. The maps are reproduced from the US Army Official History of the war in the Pacific.

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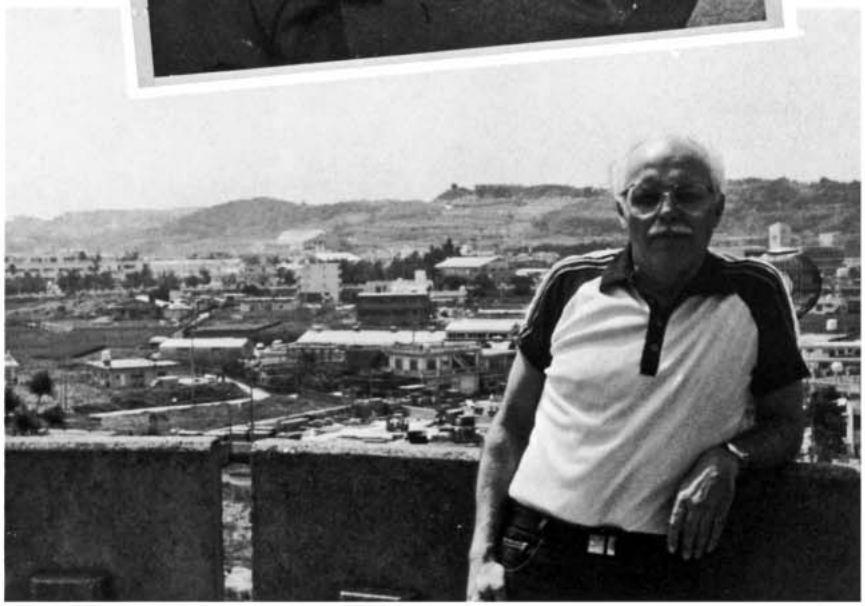


This is a personal story — the story of one man — a United States Marine — in the battle for Okinawa. Charles Leonard, a member of the First Marine Division, was just eighteen when he was shipped in as one of 2,500 riflemen replacements in May 1945. The invasion had begun on April 1 — by the time the campaign ended on June 22 over a quarter of a million soldiers and civilians, men, women and children were dead in what Charles describes as 'for ferocity and inhumanity, perhaps the single most costly battle ever'. In April 1983 he returned to the island from Danville, California — fulfilling a promise he made to himself thirty-eight years before that some day he would return.

OKINAWA

BY CHARLES J. LEONARD

For a battle which was to end with so many casualties, Operation Iceberg began paradoxically with a virtually unopposed landing mid-way down the western coast, either side of the seaport town of Hagushi — seen in the centre of the picture.

The 82-day battle for the island of Okinawa was the most costly and violent campaign of the Pacific War. Both sides often came to close quarters. Bayonets were regularly used to kill and, until the last days of the campaign, few prisoners were taken alive by the Americans. The Japanese killed all prisoners.

Okinawa received comparatively little notoriety in 1945 because, while the battle raged, the European War was grinding to a highly publicized close. With the exception of the respected and cherished, diminutive combat reporter, Ernie Pyle, most of the well-known American writers were celebrating in Europe. Who whould be crazy enough to wallow in the mud, slime and maggots of a rain-drenched battlefield reminiscent of the trench warfare of World War I when he could be drinking wine in Paris? Only one major reporter, the infantryman's friend, Ernie Pyle, chose to forsake the excitement in Europe and three weeks before VE-Day Ernie died in a ditch, a Japanese machine gun bullet in his brain.

Okinawa saw two armies, the US Tenth and the Japanese Thirty-second pitted against each other. When it was over, both Army commanders lay rotting in the rubble.

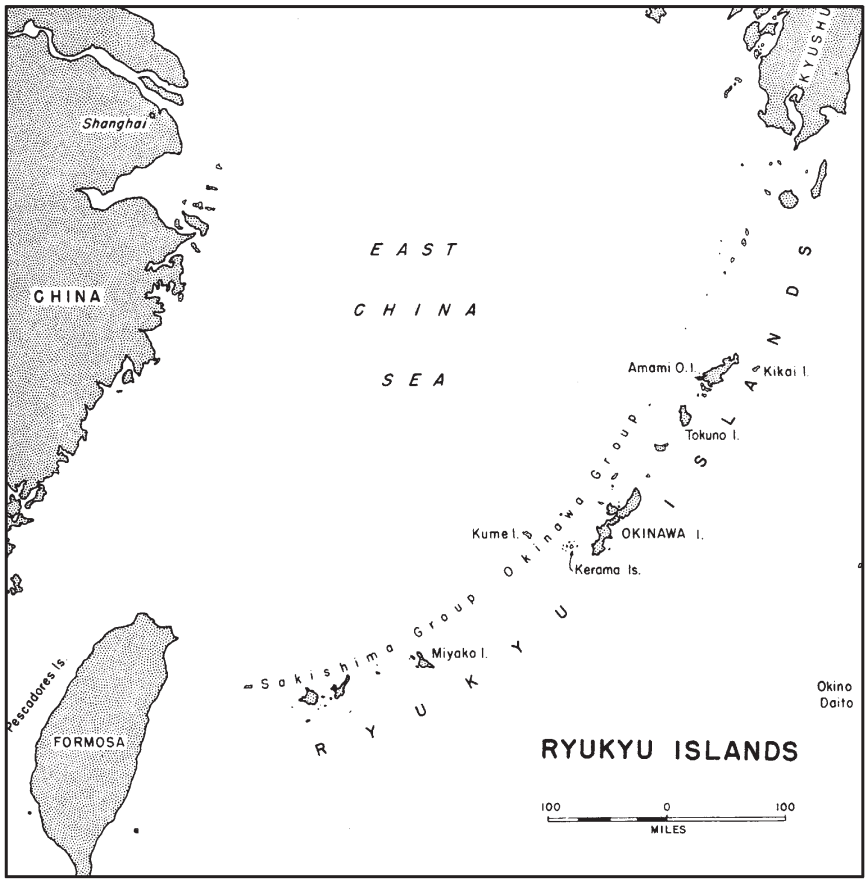
Okinawa saw the destructive force of the human bomb. Kamakazi pilots recklessly hurtled themselves at the American fleet. Thirty-four major US ships were sunk and 368 severely damaged. Five thousand US sailors died and an equal number were wounded. The United States lost 763 airplanes and the Japanese 7,830. The *Yamato*, the largest battleship in the world, was sent on a suicidal, one-way mission to blast the American transport fleet with its 18-inch guns. The *Yamato* was hit with nineteen torpedoes and went down before it could accomplish its objective. Three thousand four hundred crew members died. Two hundred seventy survived.

As for human casualties ashore, no one has been able to make an accurate account. It is believed that at least 150,000 civilians were killed. The Japanese Army suffered 108,000 dead. American casualties on land were 7,374 killed, 240 missing and 31,800 wounded. For every one square mile of the defended area of Okinawa there were 3,000 human casualties.

During most of the three month campaign heavy rain fell on the battlefield. A fierce typhoon battered the island and for days nothing could move on the three-foot deep muddy roads. To add to the misery, the Japanese defenders were dug deeply into thousands of limestone and coral caves. They had to be burned and blasted out. They did not surrender. They stayed, fought, and died.

The battle ended on June 22, 1945. Shortly thereafter the atomic bombs were dropped and the world's worst war was over. Everyone wanted to forget the horror that had fallen on mankind for six years. The last battle was the easiest to forget — except for those who were there.

The 22nd Marines coming ashore on Easter Sunday 1945: it was also April Fools' Day.



The Ryukyu Islands comprise a chain of some 140 submerged mountains stretching for an arc of 800 miles between Formosa and the southernmost main island of Japan — Kyushu. Okinawa lies more or less in the centre of the group (Gunto) and its capture was seen by the Americans as a further step in tightening the stranglehold around Japan, cutting communications through the East China Sea and providing an advanced naval and air base for further operations against Japan itself.

Okinawa is the main island of the Ryukyu Chain. It is the 47th Prefecture of Japan and lies about 350 miles from the tip of Kyushu. It is populated by some of the most peace-loving people on this earth. Okinawa is 60 miles long and about 18 miles at its widest. It is shaped like a North American rattlesnake with its triangular head pointing toward the Philippines. The most notorious occupant of the island is the poisonous Habu, a distant cousin of the rattlesnake, but lacking rattles.

For more than six hundred years of recorded history prior to April 1, 1945, the 800,000 inhabitants experienced little major violence, except from nature which periodically hurtled a raging typhoon at them.

At one time or another, both China and Japan had claimed title to the island chain but it was not until 1879 that the more powerful of the two Asian countries annexed the Ryukyus as a prefecture of Japan. The passive stonemasons, pottery makers, weavers and farmers merely shrugged their shoulders and made no serious effort to prevent the takeover.

The history of the Ryukyus, once called the 'Kingdom of Lewchew', goes back into unrecorded times. One of the most noteworthy events took place in the 12th century when King Shimba Junkie selected a large, prominent hill slightly south of the old capital city of Shuri, and two miles east of the port city of Naha, and on this site he built Shuri Castle, including the palace, throne room, royal enclosure, and many beautiful park areas containing shrines and temples. The massive walls necessary to enclose the castle and grounds were constructed of hand-hewn fitted limestone and coral blocks. In some places the walls were twenty feet high. Most of the buildings were wooden with clay tile roofs.

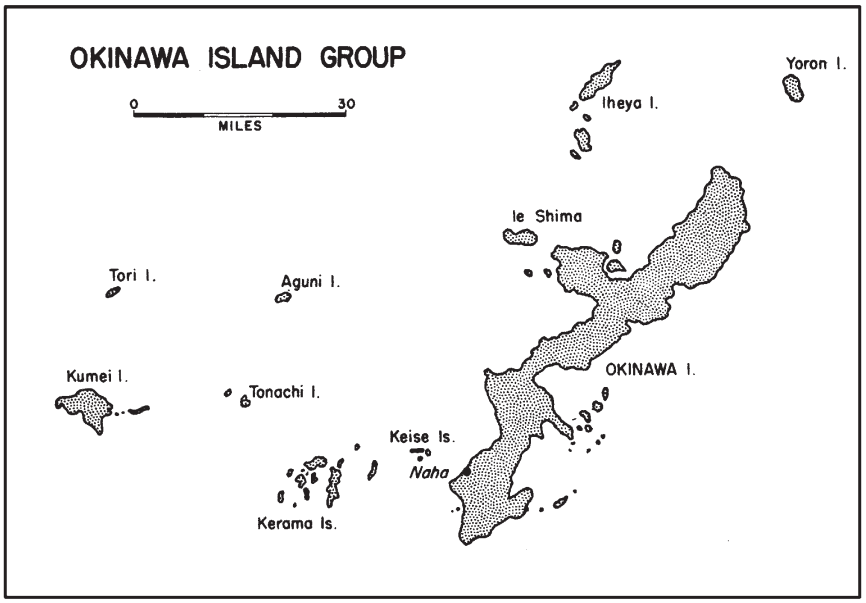
On May 26, 1853, the young King Sho-Tai watched nervously from his castle crest as Commodore Matthew Galbraith Perry led a squadron of five American warships into Naha Harbor. A boatload of lesser officials was sent rowing out to determine the intentions of the Americans. Commodore Perry advised that he was coming ashore for the purpose of calling upon the King in his royal palace. He stated firmly that he expected a reception befitting a squadron commander and diplomatic representative of the United States. He was rebuffed and decided to 'show the colors'.

On Monday, June 6, 1853, as the orange-red sun was beginning to highlight the imposing stone walls of the castle to the east, Commodore Perry landed with several companies of heavily armed marines and two cannons. The column marched toward Naha, and with flags waving wound through the narrow streets and up the stone road which rose steadily toward the imposing entrance to the castle grounds. Crowds of gaping Okinawans lined the route. Never had they witnessed such a show of force. The American Marines towered above the tallest Okinawan. The villagers wondered what fate awaited them and their King.

After the landing party passed under the beautiful Shurei-No-Mon ceremonial gate and approached the first of the five heavily timbered gates leading to the Throne Room, they found it closed and barred. The Regent of Okinawa, representing the King, appeared from his quarters below the castle and asked Perry to give up his plan to invade the castle grounds. He advised that a sumptuous banquet awaited the Commodore and all of his party at the Regent's palatial home. Perry ignored this plea and ordered his cannons to be made ready to fire. Messengers were hurriedly dispatched and the five gates were quickly opened. Okinawa had been rudely brought into the 'civilized' world. (A few days later the Regent disappeared. It is rumored that he took his life on June 23.)

Perry spent several months negotiating for the use of Naha as a refuelling port for the American fleet which was headed toward Japan to open that nation to the west.

It is, perhaps, one of the ironies of history that when he left Okinawa for the last time, Commodore Perry carried with him a compact signed by the King of Okinawa in 1854. It reads in part: 'Hereafter whenever citizens of the United States come to the Lewchews they shall be treated with great courtesy and friendship'.



As a prelude to the Iceberg operation proper, eight islands in the Kerama group, fifteen miles west of Okinawa, were invaded on March 26 by the 77th Division. By the evening of March 29, at a cost of 31 American dead, all the islands had been secured. The 420th Field Artillery Group then took the isolated Keise Islands which were found to be unoccupied. It was a fortuitous move as the Americans captured some 350 depth-charge-laden 'suicide' boats which the Japanese had made ready to counter the anticipated landing on Okinawa.

Late in 1944 the American High Command decided that Japan could be conquered only by invasion. A logistical base was needed from which to launch the massive land, sea, and air forces which would be required for this dangerous assault. The American commanders believed that any attempt to land on the main Japanese islands would be met at the beach by several million fanatical soldiers, militia and hostile armed civilians. Events to date had only increased this belief. The sacrifices of the suicide-bent Kamikaze Corps and the fierce no-quarter resistance at places like Tarawa, Peleliu and Iwo Jima seemed to justify this conclusion. Therefore, careful preparation was needed before 'Operation Olympic', the November 1945 landing on Kyushu, and 'Operation Coronet', the March 1946 invasion of Honshu, could be undertaken. Okinawa already had two major airfields, several minor ones and room for more. There was ample space for the millions of tons of logistical material to feed the needs of the huge army of American serviceman who would storm the beaches of the main home islands. Provision had to be made for the estimated one million US casualties as well as for the several million Japanese who would die or be maimed.

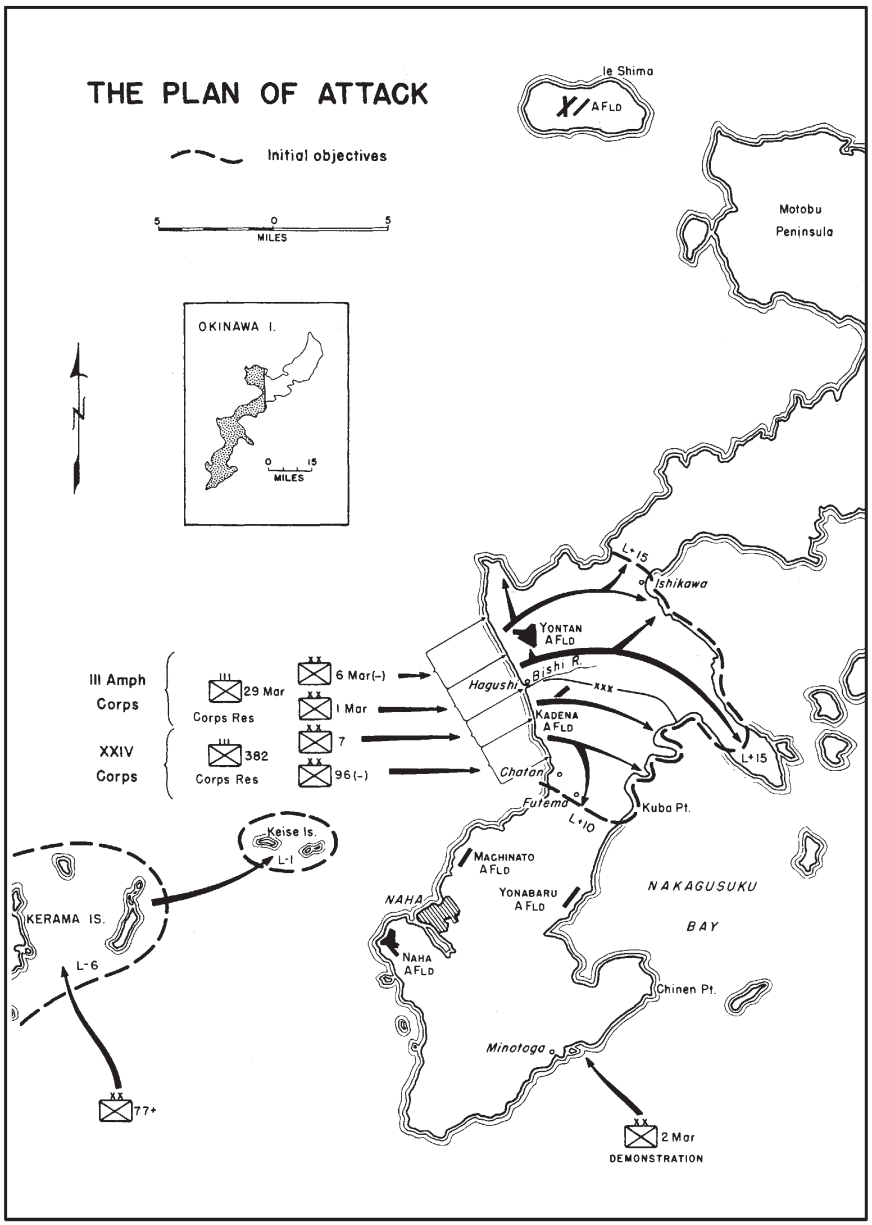
Okinawa was to be the 'England' of the Pacific for logistical purposes. If the Americans believed this, so, too, did the Japanese. They planned to defend this island to the death. In preparation for the coming siege, they sent two of their best generals to take charge. They also dispatched the 9th, 24th, and 62nd Infantry Divisions and several independent brigades. Artillery and infantry supplies poured into the port of Naha during late 1944. Okinawans were conscripted by the thousands, both as fighters and to construct the cave fortifications which were being burrowed into the rocky ridges and hills of the southern third of the island.

Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima was appointed Commander of the Thirty-second Army in August 1944. General Ushijima was a calm, take-charge officer who had commanded troops in Burma earlier in the war. Lieutenant General Isamu Cho, Chief of Staff, was an equally talented infantry commander but, in contrast to Ushijima, Cho was a hard-driving, aggressive, hot-tempered leader who reputedly abused those around him. Colonel Hiromechi Yahara was the senior staff officer in charge of operations and the only high-ranking members of the staff to survive the campaign. Most of the information about the constitution of the Thirty-second Army and its defense preparations has come from interviews with Yahara conducted shortly after his capture.

At the height of the preparation for the defense of the island, General Ushijima was distressed to learn that Tokyo was detaching the 9th Division and sending it to the Philippines. Early in December 1944 this veteran unit was embarked to Formosa where it sat out the remainder of the war, impotently, while major fighting took place both in the Philippines and at Okinawa. Many an American serviceman is now enjoying middle age because this well-trained division was removed prior to the invasion.

With the loss of the 9th Division General Ushijima gave up any thought of defending the anticipated landing beach and the northern two-thirds of the island. He concentrated his remaining forces in the southern twenty miles with its deep draws and high ridges.

Though weakened, Ushijima still had 110,000 soldiers including the veteran 14,000-man 62nd Division which had seen action in China and was led by Major General Keiichi Arikawa. The other division, the 24th, was composed of 15,000 first-class infantrymen who had spent many years in Manchuria. It was headed by Lieutenant General Tatsumi Amamiya. Major General Kosuki Wada led



Because of the reefs which fringe the Okinawa coast the number of suitable landing beaches was limited. The terrain inland further restricted the choice of the bridgehead as it did the plan for developing the ensuing land battle. Forged by the experience of many island invasions across the Pacific, the decision was made to land in the Hagushi area in the southern portion of Okinawa. Here the reef was close inshore and a thrust across the island would cut the Japanese forces in two. A diversionary landing by the 2nd Marine Division was to be made near Minotoga in the hope of fooling the defenders as to American intentions. H-Hour was set for 8.30 a.m. At 5.30 a.m., twenty minutes before dawn, the pre-landing bombardment opened up from a combined force of 10 battleships, 9 cruisers, 23 destroyers and 177 other craft loosing over 100,000 shells, mortar bombs and rockets at the beaches — the heaviest concentration of naval gunfire ever to support a landing of troops at an average of 25 missiles per 100 square yards. At 7.45 a.m. carrier-based aircraft struck with napalm and machine gun fire. There was almost no return fire and the entire landing took place with incredible ease. As the troops — from both the Army and the Marine Corps — moved inland the burning question was: Where is the enemy? By 11.30 a.m. the first two airfield objectives had been taken and by nightfall some units had advanced nearly three miles. Although the Japanese air force began to attack the bridgehead using suicide tactics, by April 4 the Americans had reached the eastern coast and the move began to wheel north and south.

the 5th Artillery Command which had fought at Bataan. It included thirty-six 105mm howitzers, eight 150mm guns, seventy-two 75mm cannons and many of the new 320mm spigot-mortars which weighed 675 pounds and in flight had a tendency to turn end-over-end. They were impressive, however, and when they hit a target, considerable damage resulted.

The two remaining major units were the Okinawa Naval Base force composed of 10,000 sailors and marines led by Rear Admiral Minoru Ota, and the 44th Independent Mixed Brigade. The 44th IMB had lost many of its men when the ship carrying it to Okinawa had been torpedoed in June 1944. It had been rebuilt to a strength of 5,000 men and placed 'on line'.

The Thirty-second Army included a number of other smaller commands such as the 15th Independent Mixed Brigade and the 27th Tank Regiment. Japanese tanks were,

Charles Leonard's battalion, regimental and divisional commanders. L-R: Lieutenant Colonel James C. Magee, CO 2nd Battalion; Major General Pedro A. del Valle, 1st Marine Division commander, with Colonel A. T. Mason, commander of the 1st Marine Regiment.

American infantrymen on all fronts looked on war correspondent Ernie Pyle as their friend, and the one man who told the story of 'their' war. Following them through North Africa, Sicily, Italy and France, he joined the US Tenth Army in Okinawa. Here he shares a smoke with members of Charles Leonard's division.

however, of insignificant effectiveness in the defense of the island.

Thousands of Okinawans were drafted into 'Boetai' units which at first served mostly labor and supply functions. They were used as infantry in the later stages.

General Ushijima selected the 600-year old Shuri Castle as his command post. It was ideally situated with a 360-degree view of the island. Should the Americans land at the southern tip he would order his troops to pivot in their positions and turn south. He was assisted in this decision by the fact that the terrain in the southern part of the island consisted of many ridge lines running across the island from east to west. Both sides of each of the ridges were filled with caves and tunnels. Regardless of whether the Americans came from north or south they would be required to fight up the side of each ridge and cross the exposed draw while being blasted from reverse slope fortifications. Artillery fire was directed from Shuri Castle Hill, the highest point in the center of the series of ridges. Though the Americans controlled the air and the sea around Okinawa they would have to dig and burn out the deeply buried Japanese.

After considerable thought, Admiral Raymond Spruance, Commander of American Forces, decided to invade at the Hagushi Beach. On April 1, Easter Sunday, and also known as 'April Fool's Day', the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions and the 7th and 96th Army Divisions landed 60,000 infantrymen. The April Fool syndrome prevailed. There was virtually no resistance and by the end of the first day US Forces had control of the two major airfields, Kadena and Yontan.

The commander of the Tenth United States Army was Lieutenant General Simon Bolivar Buckner, Jr., the son of a famous Civil War Confederate General. The Tenth Army consisted of three Marine divisions and three Army infantry divisions. The 1st, 2nd and 6th Marine Divisions were part of the III Amphibious Corps led by Major General Roy Geiger. The 7th, 77th and 96th Army Divisions comprised the XXIV Army Corps and were led by Major General John Hodge. The 27th Army Division was available for use and was scheduled to garrison the island upon its capture.

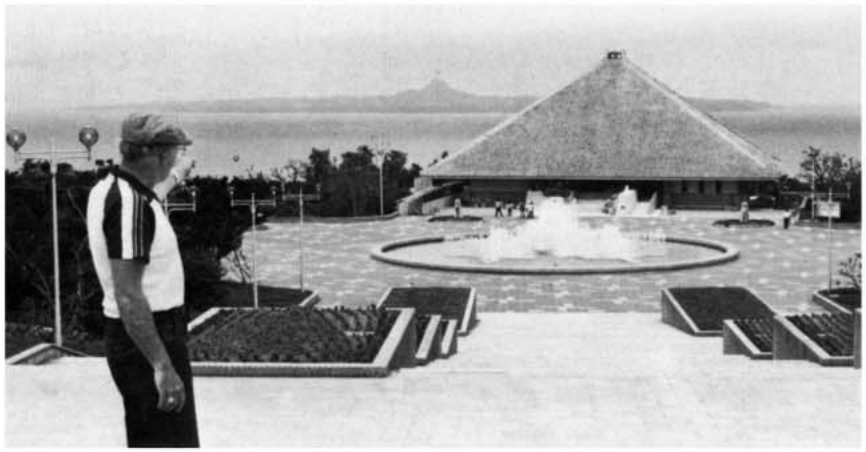
The Marines turned north and spent the month of April securing the rugged upper two-thirds of the island. A major battle was fought by the 6th Division on Motobu Peninsula while the 77th Army Division was being bloodied securing the small island of Ie Shima located off the tip of Motobu Peninsula. It was on Ie Shima that the famous war correspondent, Ernie Pyle, died. He was buried with his buddies in the 77th Division cemetary.

To properly set the stage for the 82-day

'I feel a responsibility, a duty toward the soldiers, I've become their mouthpiece — the only one they have.' In a letter to his wife he confided: 'You can't know the relief I felt for I had dreaded this one terribly. Now it is behind me, I will never make another landing. Outside of an accident of some kind I feel now that at last I have a pretty good chance of coming through this war alive.'

However, when the 77th Division landed on Ie Shima, the small island off the Motobu Peninsula, he asked to go along. He landed on Red Beach 2 and drove forward with Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Coolidge, commander of the 305th Infantry. At the base of the Pinnacle a Japanese machine gun forced them to take cover in a ditch. As Ernie raised his head and shouted: 'Are you all right?' the gun fired again and he fell with a bullet in the left temple, just below his helmet. First buried on Ie Shima, his remains were later transferred to the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii.

The 77th erected a makeshift wooden marker on the spot where he was killed — this permanent memorial bears the shoulder patch of the Liberty Division. Ernie's memory is still cherished by present-day members of the division and their new headquarters at Fort Totten, New York, were dedicated to his name on April 23, 1983 — just five days after the thirty-eighth anniversry of his death. *Below:* **A Marine looks out at Ie Shima . . . and remembers.**



fight in southern Okinawa, it is important to describe the terrain. As mentioned earlier, there are a series of east-west ridges which parallel each other. The first major battleground was in the Kakazu area. Kakazu Ridge overlooks a deep gorge. In order to capture the ridge, members of the 96th Division had to cross the gorge under heavy machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire. They then had to climb the steep ridge and try to hold it while under constant counter-attack from swarms of Japanese on the reverse slope and in Kakazu village. From April 9 to 14 the battle raged back and forth.

The Kakazu Ridge line south of the gorge was actually a series of ridges running west to east. There was Kakazu West, which ran north and south, Kakazu, Nishibaru, and Tanabaru. A small gap existed between Kakazu and Nishibaru and Highway 5 ran through this opening on its way to Shuri.

The Japanese had given the 62nd Division responsibility for the defense of Kakazu and they fought savagely. Despite the efforts of all three regiments of the US 96th Division, the Kakazu sector still remained in Japanese hands on April 18 when the fresh troops of the US 27th Division replaced the battered veterans of the 96th. The Division had suffered 603 dead and missing and 1,401 wounded at Kakazu, and 4,663 Japanese had been killed. Medals of Honor were awarded to Pfc. Edward Moskala and Sergeant Beaufort T. Anderson.

A general American advance was scheduled for April 19 with the 27th Division to attack on the right flank including the Machinato Harbor area and Kakazu; the 96th to concentrate on Nishibaru and the 7th Division to take part of Tanabaru Ridge and the hills on the east coast, including the town of Ouki (Wauke). General Buckner believed that with the addition of the veterans of the 27th Division he could blast through Kakazu directly into Shuri. He was wrong.

The 27th Division Engineers constructed a foot bridge for the infantry and a pontoon bridge for vehicles across Machinato Inlet on the coast west of Kakazu. These crossings were erected at night under the noses of the Japanese soldiers occupying the high southern ridge. Everything went smoothly. A steady stream of soldiers slipped across the foot bridge and took up position on the rugged western end of the second east-west ridge named the Urasoe-Mura escarpment.

While the 27th was moving forward on the west coast, the 96th and 7th Divisions were stopped cold. The Kakazu Gorge ran almost across the island and Nishibaru and Tanabaru ridges were also impenetrable fortresses. Highway 5 separated the 96th and 27th Divisions.

Despite having American troops on the west end of Urasoe-Mura south of Kakazu, the Kakazu sector was still held by the Japanese. So, General Bruce of the 27th Division obtained permission to send a force of thirty tanks and self-propelled guns down Highway 5 to circle around the east end of Kakazu Ridge and come up behind the ridge and blast the heavily armed Japanese soldiers holed up on the reverse slope and in the town of Kakazu.

The tank attack was initiated without infantry support and had disastrous results. As they moved down the road, a single 47mm anti-tank gun on Nishibaru knocked out four tanks. The remainder got confused, became

Left: **The opening action of the American advance which began on April 19 involved the crossing of the Machinato Inlet by the 27th Infantry. Divisional engineers constructed this footbridge under fire from the Japanese-held Urasoe-Mura escarpment in the distance.** *Right:* **Charles Leonard's comparison in 1983. The terrain on the south side of the inlet has been blotted out by the building of a pier from east to west slap bang in the centre of the waterway parallel to the N-S shores (see map page 9).**

lost and were badly shot up. Several made it to the rear of Kakazu village but suffered heavy losses from suicide attackers equipped with 22lb satchel charges. The absence of infantry protection was a serious error.

Of the thirty tanks that had commenced the operation only eight returned. The destruction of twenty-two tanks in one operation was the greatest loss suffered by US armor in a single engagement during the Okinawa campaign. A lesson was learned the hard way. Never send tanks to fight unprotected by infantry.

While their tanks were being battered, the doughboys of the 27th Division were also suffering. Repeated attacks across the gorge and up Kakazu Ridge and Kakazu West were thrown back with heavy losses. Attempts to flank Kakazu Ridge from east and west also were repulsed.

The next east-west fortress escarpment, Urasoe-Mura, is a thousand yards across the valley south of Kakazu Ridge. Where it crosses Highway 5 it is called Maeda Ridge and has a high prominent rock called the Needle. The 27th Division had successfully crossed Machinato Inlet and had a foothold on western Urasoe-Mura where it dips into the sea. Being unable to crack the Kakazu line, the 27th swung all its battalions around to the west of Kakazu and up on to Urasoe-Mura. Heavy fighting took place before that escarpment was secured.

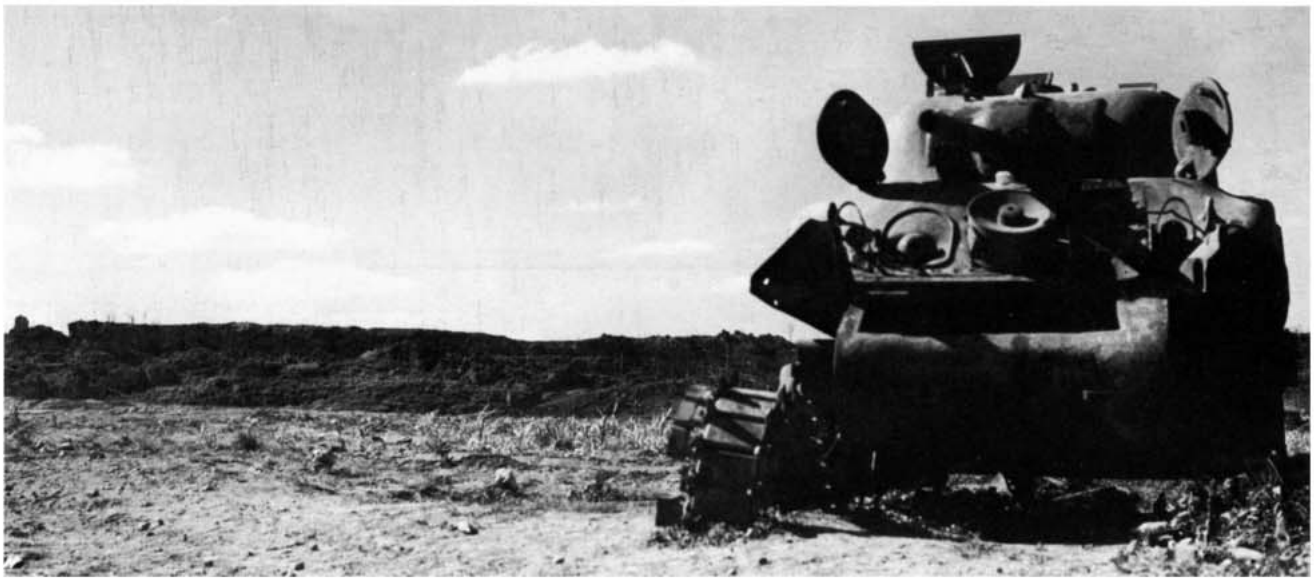
On the Maeda (eastern end of the escarpment) the US 77th Infantry Division had replaced the decimated 96th and was fighting for its life to scale the sheer cliffs of the ridge and to hold Needle Rock, which had been captured by the 96th but was now the scene of hand-to-hand fighting. During one counter-attack the Japanese killed or wounded all of the soldiers on top of Maeda except for an unarmed medic named Desmond T. Doss. Doss was a Seventh Day Adventist and refused to carry a weapon. When the rest of his comrades were driven back down the steep side of the ridge, Doss stayed behind to tend the many wounded. He came under heavy fire but refused to leave his buddies. Ignoring the bullets and mortar shells, Doss carried fifty wounded men to the edge and, using ropes, lowered them to the base of the thirty-five foot cliff. He was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honour.

Meanwhile the 7th Division was pushing through a series of hills running from Tanabaru to the east coast. Hill 78 and Skyline Ridge at Ouki held out until April 24.

The most dangerous situation was still at Kakazu. The Japanese had heavily reinforced this area and when the 27th Division could not

Kakazu — a name which typified the horror of the fanatical Japanese defence in the Okinawa campaign. Photo *above* shows Kakazu West and the west end of Kakazu Ridge from the high ground north of the gorge. *Below:* Today dense foliage precludes a matching shot — this photograph being taken from the floor of the gorge looking west towards Kakazu West.

Looking east from the top of Kakazu West itself, the view today towards the Kakazu Ridge — covered by the mass of trees and shrubs in the centre — towards the Urasoe-Mura escarpment in the background. The modern bridge now carries Highway 330 across the valley.



take the ridge, permission was granted to bypass it and put all their battalions on Urasoe-Mura escarpment south of Kakazu. This was an untenable situation. Not a single living American soldier faced the Japanese troops dug in on Kakazu Ridge. Had the Japanese force been stronger they could have counter-attacked and assaulted the rear area to the north. This would have raised havoc with supply and the mammoth job of constructing airfields.

On the evening of April 21, General Hodge ordered that a special unit of men and tanks from the 96th, 27th and 7th Divisions be assembled and committed to wiping out the Kakazu pocket. On April 24 this outfit, dubbed the 'Bradford Task Force', attacked in a driving rain storm. To their astonishment they discovered that the Japanese had pulled out. Kakazu was taken and never again was the Japanese Army given such a unique opportunity to inflict heavy damage upon the American rear area.

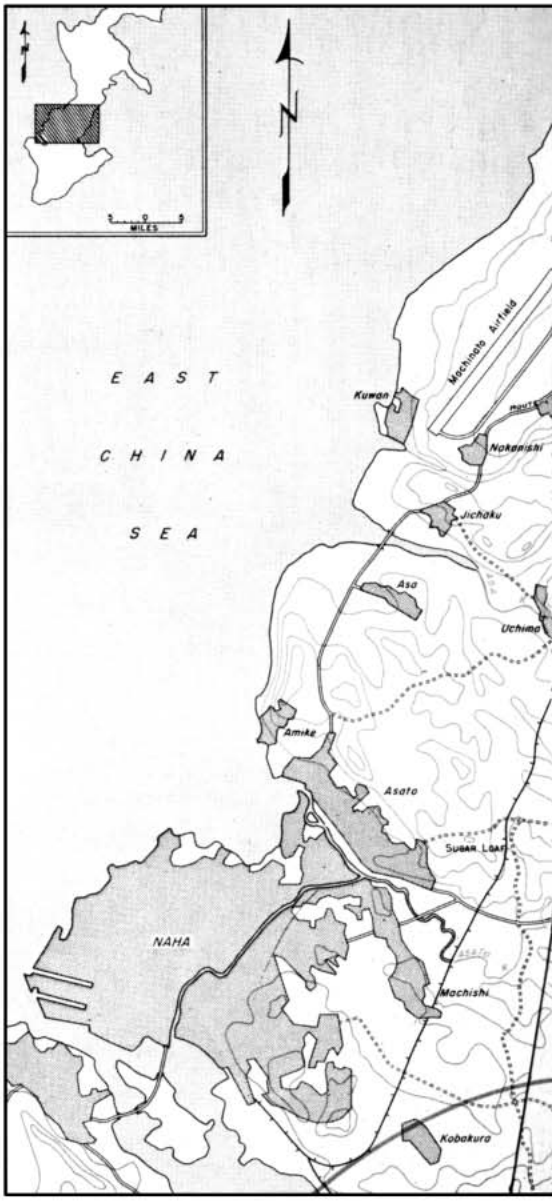
By April 30 the Kakazu, Urasoe-Mura, Maeda, siege lines had been captured. One month of desperate combat had so badly decimated the American Army units that it was decided to remove the 27th Division and replace it with the 1st Marine Division. The 6th Marine Division was also put on alert to be prepared to join the fighting in the south.

The 1st Marine Division relieved the 27th on April 30. Major General Pedro A. Del Valle, the Division's Commanding General, ordered an attack for May 2. The initial objective was the north bank of the Asa River. The enemy fought back and killed or wounded 298 Marines in two days. The Leathernecks took their objective and then turned east to straighten out the line, sending the 5th Regiment into the Awacha sector south of Urasoe-Mura Ridge.

On the evening of May 2 the Japanese held a strategy meeting in the tunnelled rooms below Shuri Castle. General Ushijima

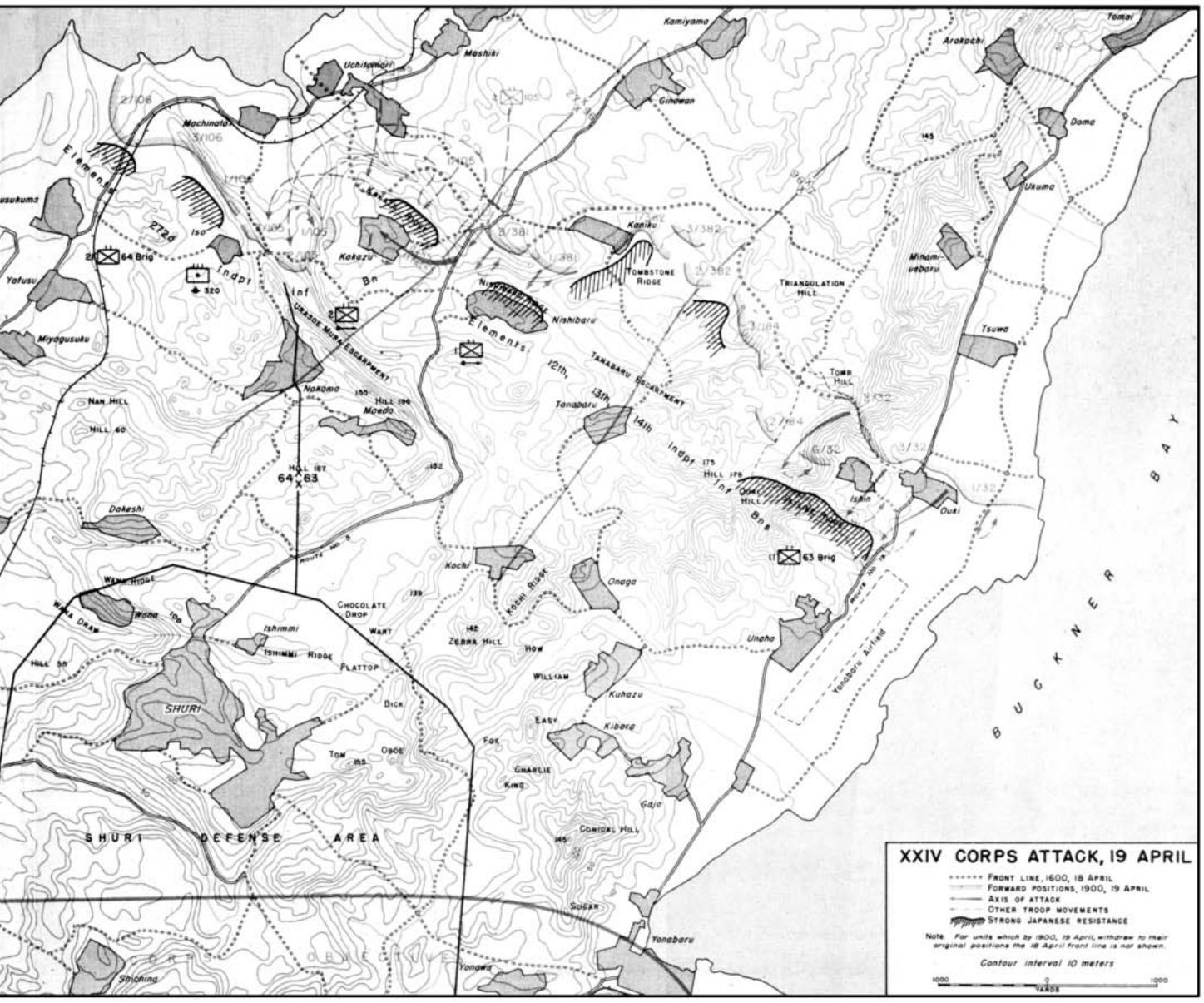
The next Japanese siege line was the Urasoe-Mura escarpment. Photo *above* shows the north end at Maeda with Needle Rock on the extreme left. This casualty appears to be pretty well scavenged. *Below:* Because of the rampant undergrowth, Charles Leonard took this comparison higher up from the Toyota car park beside Highway 5.

Left: **Rope cargo nets were used to climb the steep north face of Maeda.** *Right:* **New tombs under construction below Needle Rock. This is the approximate location where Desmond Doss won his Medal of Honor for lowering wounded down the cliff while under fire.**



Above: **Pfc. Gordon Lundmann took shelter in this crevice on the escarpment when dozens of Japanese counter-attacked on April 29.** *Below:* **Fighting took place all round Needle Rock — this is the south face today.**

Then: **Once over the escarpment, soldiers of the 77th Division advance past another Sherman which has struck a land mine.**



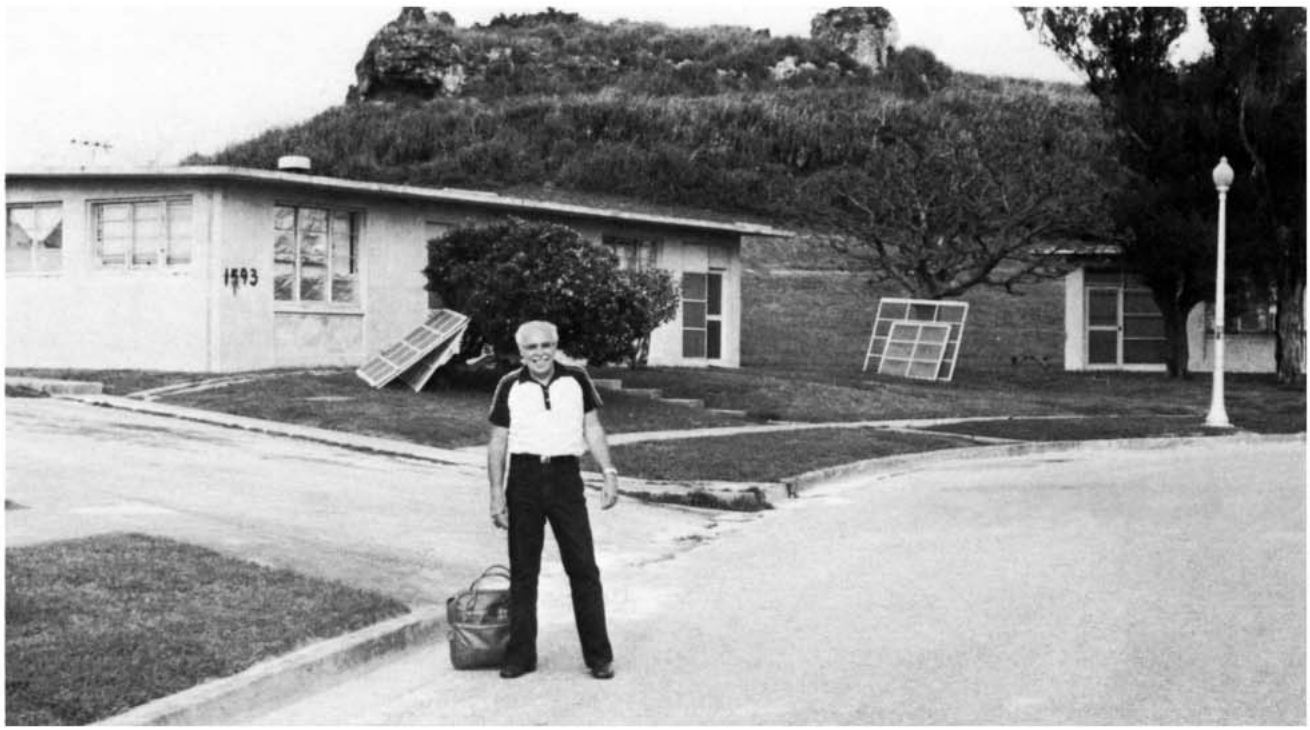
Now: **Needle Rock remains a prominent landmark. A good indication of the vegetation which has since covered the ridge.**

assembled all of his major officers and listened while General Cho demanded a decisive counter-attack. Cho had plenty of support. The Japanese generals were becoming impatient with defensive fighting and wanted to strike back. Ushijima reluctantly agreed and plans were drawn for an all-out attack on May 4. This was not to be a wild banzai charge as each unit committed was to carry out a specific mission.

The Japanese 24th Division which had not yet been seriously bloodied was to open the attack at daybreak of May 4. The 22nd Regiment was to break through at Kochi and capture Tanabaru escarpment. The 89th Regiment was to advance to Ouki on the east coast and meet a special raiding party which would land by boat to the rear of the US 7th Division. The 32nd Regiment was to crack the Maeda line now held by the US 77th Division and join with the 44th Independent Mixed Brigade in a north-westerly sweep behind the 1st Marine Division on the west coast. A naval attack force was to land far up the northern coastline.

The objective of the assault was to isolate the 1st Marine Division and destroy it and then to capture Futenma where the Japanese

Charles Leonard comments on the pluck of this Marine standing out in the open to get a clearer shot into the mouths of the caves on Charlie Hill, which lies on the south-eastern corner of the Japanese Shuri Castle defensive area (see map pages 8-9). As none of the caves are smoking, the man was evidently attacking before the flame-throwing Sherman *(below and front cover)* **arrived.**



From May 1945 to April 1983: Charles in front of his namesake — actually called after C Company, 22nd Marines.

The combined use of liquid flame and explosives proved to be a most effective way of attacking the Japanese, living and fighting from the numerous caves which had been converted into fortified positions. General Buckner, the American commander, called it the 'blowtorch and corkscrew' method. The defenders on Okinawa first experienced the armoured flame-throwing tank when the 719th Tank Battalion used their terrifying weapon for the first time on April 19. Their 55 Shermans had arrived on April 7 to be quickly dispersed around the divisions, yet in the battles of April 8-12 they had only used their machine guns. This Sherman is attacking caves on Crescent Hill (also called Half Moon Hill). The original caption identifies the men as being from Company K, 3rd Battalion of the 5th Marines (1st Division) although the US Army official history gives them as the 4th Marines of the 6th Division. Both units fought at Half Moon — the division boundary ran just east of the hill (see map page 12).

believed General Buckner had his headquarters. It was an ambitious plan. Artillery support was plentiful and the few tanks available would be pressed into service.

On the morning of May 4 more than 5,000 rounds of artillery fell on the US 7th Division, followed closely by thousands of well-equipped, first-rate Japanese infantry. The battle raged viciously from Maeda to Ouki. The fighting was often hand-to-hand. American positions were overrun and no prisoners were taken.

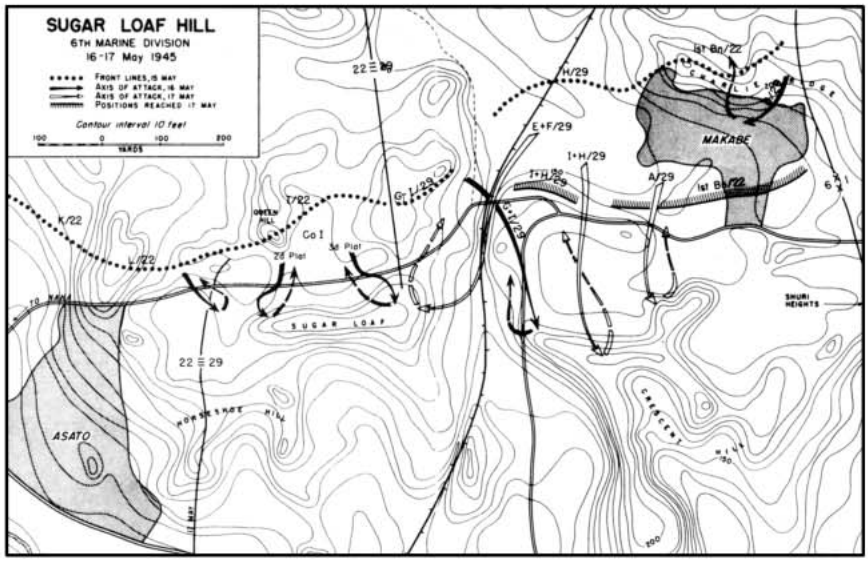
Because of heavy rains the enemy tanks had difficulty in traversing the bottomless muddy roads and were caught in the open by American counter-battery shelling. Most were knocked out and the rest withdrew. Both naval raiding parties were intercepted and destroyed. The attempts to encircle the Marines failed and by midnight of May 5 General Ushijima had to accept the inevitable.

The only successful gain had been in the Tanabaru sector where the 24th Division broke through between the American 7th and 77th Divisions and reached the top of the escarpment. This penetration was more than a mile deep and was cause for alarm at Buckner's headquarters. The 17th Infantry Regiment of the US 7th Division counter-attacked and, after sustaining heavy losses, killed or drove off the remnants of the 24th Division. The top of Tanabaru was littered with Japanese dead, many of whom were carrying American weapons including machine guns, BARs, carbines and tommy guns. The Japanese withdrew to their original lines and took stock of their losses.

On the evening of May 5, General Ushijima decided that from this point forward the Thirty-second Army would conduct only defensive warfare. To date he had lost more than 5,000 of his best infantry and, aside from

Corkscrew. The other method for rooting out the well-entrenched Japanese demonstrated here by a three-man demolition team from the 77th Infantry Division. Satchel charges are tossed into the mouth of the cave, the resulting explosion usually collapsing the entrance, burying the occupants alive. Other members of the squad are ready to deal with any who try to escape.

'The only way we can take the top of this hill is to make a Jap banzai charge ourselves.' Thus Major Henry Courtney, the executive officer of the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Marines, announced the dreadful battle to take Sugar Loaf — a vital key in the Naha-Shuri-Yonabaru defensive line. The Japanese on the reverse slope (photographed here by S/Sgt J. J. Connolly) could not be dislodged by mortar or artillery fire; tanks were unable to creep round the west slope because of anti-tank fire from several directions; and infantry accompanying the tanks were helpless under that fire. Marines on the other side of Sugar Loaf could not advance over the crest because of fire from adjacent hills; Marines fighting for those hills were held up in turn by fire from Sugar Loaf. Major Courtney, crouching in a foxhole, was killed instantly; he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. Veterans of the 6th Marine Division called May 16 the bitterest day of fighting during the entire Okinawa campaign.



killing and wounding 1,200 Americans, he had no other positive results to show from the counter-attack. Tokyo had ordered him to keep the American forces engaged at Okinawa for the maximum time possible. This would allow the Kamikaze Corps to destroy the transport fleet and permit the home islands to prepare for the inevitable invasion.

Ushijima now realized that it was not possible to win at Okinawa. His was to be a rearguard, delaying action with emphasis upon making the Tenth Army pay dearly for every ridge. He had a lot more ridges. He would defend each tenaciously.

The next line consisted of a number of hill anchors on the east and west coast and the rugged Dakeshi, Wana and Ishimmi Ridges in front of Shuri Castle Hill.

The western hills were Sugar Loaf, Half Moon and Horseshoe, north-east of the flattened capital city of Naha. On May 8 General Buckner called upon the 6th Marine Division to assume responsibility for the west coast while the 1st Marine Division shifted inland to the left and took responsibility for destroying the enemy defenses at Hill Nan, Hill 60, and Dakeshi and Wana Ridges in front of Shuri Castle. The 77th Infantry Division was to capture Ishimmi Ridge and then together with the 1st Marine Division drive on through Shuri and knock out General Ushijima in his Shuri Castle cave headquarters. On the eastern side of the island the 96th Division was to secure a half-dozen hills and then assault the left anchor of the Shuri line, a tall cone-shaped hill, west of the port city of Yonabaru and appropriately called Conical Hill.

General Buckner knew that the Dakeshi – Wana – Ishimmi Ridge defense line in the center of the island was almost impregnable. It consisted of high escarpments and deep parallel draws running east to west in front of Shuri. The reverse sides of these ridges swarmed with infantry and contained hundreds of caves with interlocking fire from dozens of light and heavy machine guns, mortars and 47mm anti-tank guns. Buckner's plan was to distract the Japanese with a direct head-on assault against these formidable ridges while the US 96th Division on the east and the 6th Marine Division on the west cracked through their assigned hills and reached the paved Yonabaru – Naha road which ran from east to west behind Shuri. Once on that good road, the two divisions would race toward each other and complete the encirclement of General Ushijima, thus, cutting him off from the remainder of his forces in the last siege line four miles away at the southern end of the island.

The Tenth Army Commander's plan was bold and 'by the book' — a classic envelopment — and he hoped to win the battle by the end of May. However General Buckner failed to reckon with two unknowns: the weather and the tenacious suicidal defense of the enemy.

On the west flank the 6th Marine Division Leathernecks faced a hollowed-out hill which they promptly nicknamed Sugar Loaf. East of Sugar Loaf was a crescent-shaped series of low ridges which they called Half Moon and directly south of Sugar Loaf was a U-shaped hill with the prongs facing south. This was named Horseshoe. All three hills were mutually supporting and were honeycombed by dozens of caves and tunnels.

Movement towards this hill mass was easily observable from Dakeshi and Wana Ridges to the north-east and Shuri Castle Hill to the east. This was good artillery support country and the Japanese had many heavy guns in and about Shuri.

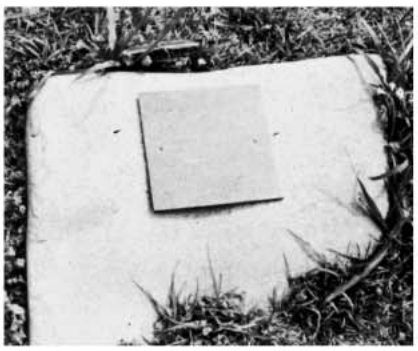
The 6th Marine Division was about to participate in its first major battle as a full division. Several of its regiments had fought in earlier Pacific campaigns but not as a division. Sugar Loaf, including its two ugly sisters, was not a place for breaking in a new

Sugar Loaf from a Japanese anti-tank gun position. It finally fell in the third week of May, the 6th Marine Division having lost 2,662 killed or wounded in the ten-day battle. However Cresent Hill still held out and just could not be taken: in the end it was by-passed in the drive to capture Naha.

Americans are still stationed on Sugar Loaf . . . which together with Charlie Hill, Horseshoe and Half Moon form part of a US forces housing area. This view of Sugar Loaf (in the distance through the trees) is seen from the crest of Horseshoe.

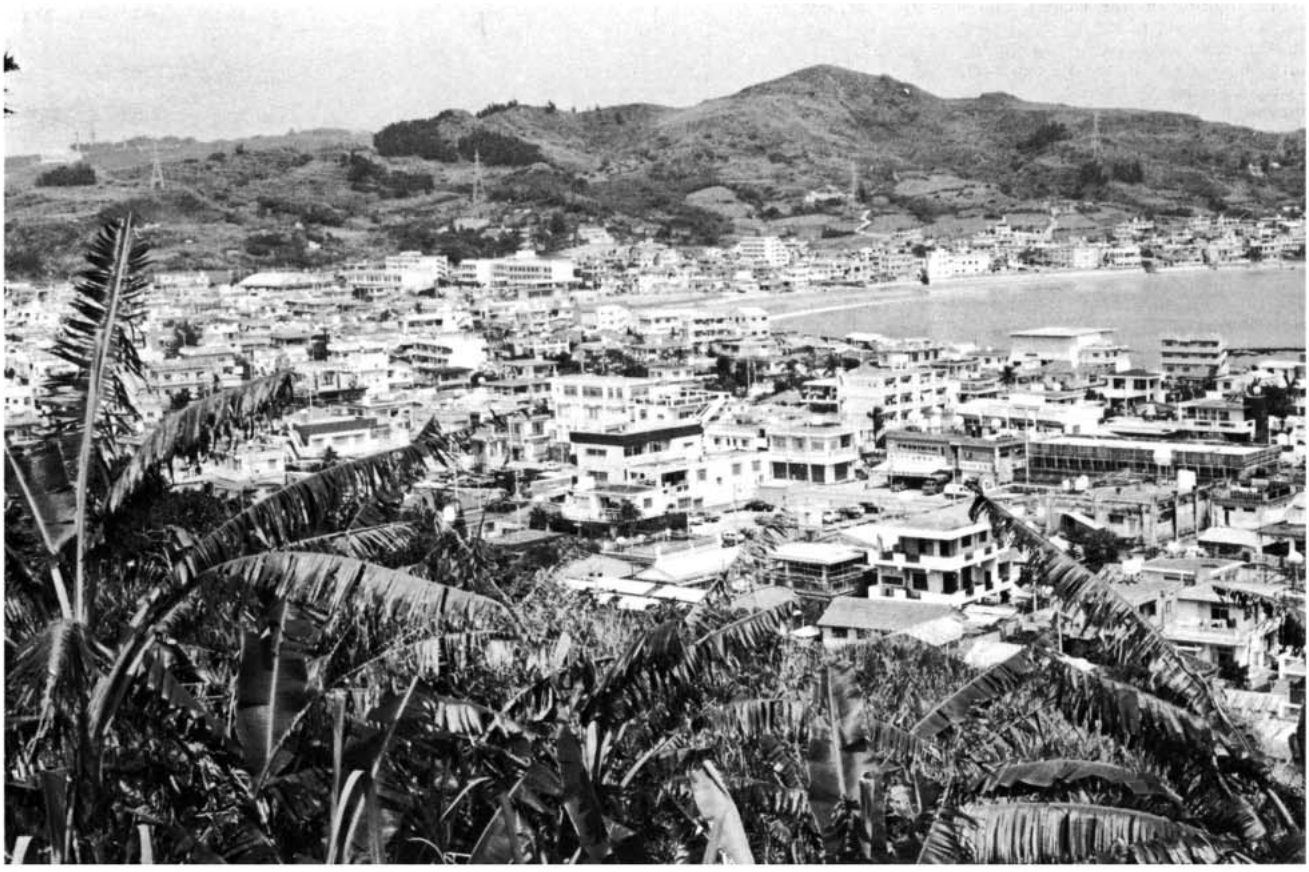
fighting force. Many have written about the seven-day battle for that lumpy hunk of coral and clay called Sugar Loaf. William Manchester, the well-known American author and historian, served there as a Marine sergeant and that fight is the central theme of his book *Goodby Darkness*. Suffice it to be said that Sugar Loaf Hill was one of the fiercest and bloodiest battlefields of the entire Pacific war. In one way or another all three regiments of the 6th Division struck at Sugar Loaf and time after time the Marines gained the top only to be counter-attacked by swarms of Japanese and driven off. But they always came back.

On May 14, Major Henry A. Courtney, Executive Officer of the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Regiment, led a small band of volunteers in a charge to the top of the hill, where they held out for several hours killing many enemy soldiers in hand-to-hand fighting. When dawn arrived on May 15 Major Courtney and most of his volunteers were dead. Only fifteen survivors were able to withdraw and most of them were wounded. Major Courtney was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. Marines dead or wounded on or about Sugar Loaf totalled 2,662, including three battalion commanders and eleven company commanders. By the time it was captured on May 19, disabled tanks littered the muddy battlefield. Sugar Loaf will live forever in the battle honors of the 6th Marine Division.



In 1982 a cub pack erected this simple plaque affixed to a concrete marker on top of Sugar Loaf, near where Major Courtney and his men were killed 'dedicated to the memory of those who fell on both sides'.

Meanwhile over on the eastern side of the battlefront the 96th Division was fighting to take Conical Hill, just north of Yonabaru, against 1,000 Japanese. The battle raged from May 10 to 21; two days later the 7th Infantry Division captured Yonabaru in a blinding rainstorm. The fall of the town turned the eastern flank of the Shuri line threatening to envelop General Ushijima and his thousands of soldiers in the centre of Shuri. Picture taken on June 27 after the battle of a brass shell-case dump graphically contrasts what was left of the town with its development today. Conical Hill in the background.



On June 18, 1945, Life magazine published a feature, '24 Hours with Infantryman Terry Moore' — a photo report by Eugene Smith centred around one man of Company F of the 184th Infantry Regiment (7th Division). On May 21-22 Smith and his camera followed Moore into action on the ridge above Yonabaru. Smith refused the offer of a rifleman to protect him because he wanted to 'be in the same spot as the guy he was photographing'.

While the Marines were dying in the mud on and around Sugar Loaf, the 77th and 96th Infantry Divisions were tackling the Conical Hill anchor on the east coast. There were a half-dozen strong point hills to be captured before assaulting Conical Hill. They had pleasant names like Chocolate Drop, Flat Top, Zebra, Baker, Harriet, Tom and Wart. They were not pleasant places.

Finally, on May 13, a rare day during which it did not rain, Companies E, F, and G of the 2nd Battalion, 383rd Infantry, 96th Division, rose up and took Conical Hill. The Japanese struck back but the GIs refused to budge.

With the capture of Conical on May 13 and Sugar Loaf on May 19, the eastern and western flanks of General Ushijima's main Shuri line were crumbling. The American 7th Division rushed through the coastal port city of Yonabaru and turned west in order to sweep behind the Shuri fortress and seal Ushijima in.

The fighting on the eastern and western coasts had been vicious and bloody. The Leathernecks of the 1st Marine Division were mired in the mud in the center of the island facing two heavily-fortressed parallel ridge lines called Dakeshi and Wana, defended by General Ushijima's best available troops, the veterans of the 62nd Division. The heavy rains of May had turned the Okinawa roads into muddy bogs yet the 1st Marine Division could not be supplied by sea, as could the 6th Marine Division on the west coast and the army on the east coast. The only means of bringing supplies and ammunition forward was either by hand or air drop. To the left of the 1st Marine Division was the 77th Army Division. They, too, faced a number of deep draws and heavily fortified ridges in the eastern Shuri area at Ishimmi.

News of the collapse of Nazi Germany on May 8, 1945 was met with little enthusiasm from Marines and soldiers of the battered Tenth Army. Driving rains, resupply problems, tenacious Japanese resistance, and continual artillery bombardment occupied the mind of the fighting man on Okinawa. The war may have been over in Europe but on that barren island the American forces had just reached the main line of resistance. At noon on May 8, 1945 every available cannon, both ashore and afloat, fired a salvo in honor of the end of the European war. Then the troops went back to the day to day job of crawling through the mud and killing their fanatical enemy.

The 1st Marine Division continued moving south. On May 9 the 1st Regiment captured Hill 60, a heavily defended outpost north of Dakeshi Ridge. During the night of May 9-10, the 5th Marine Regiment killed sixty Japanese soldiers who charged through the darkness

Smith: 'The trouble with taking photographs when the air is full of lead is that you have to stand up when anyone with any sense is lying down . . . ' *Above:* Here Terry Moore and his squad edge their way up the hillside. It was at this point that Smith was hit. *Below:* Charles Leonard climbed the hill in April 1983 to picture the spot.

and got into Marine lines. Fighting was hand-to-hand. The 7th Marine Regiment moved against the north slope of Dakeshi Ridge on May 11 and immediately came under intense artillery, mortar amd machine gun fire from the heavily fortressed reverse slope of Dakeshi, from Wana Ridge to the south and from the artillery forces dug in on Shuri Castle Ridge.

The 7th Regiment continued its assault of Dakeshi Ridge, keeping its left flank tied in with the US 77th Division facing Ishimmi. Fighting night and day, and after repulsing two counter-attacks, the 1st Marine Division finally captured Dakeshi Ridge and overran the command post cave of the Japanese 64th Regiment. Thus, the scene was set for the battle of Wana Ridge.

General Ushijima was faced with a dilemma, His Conical Hill and Sugar Loaf anchors were under heavy assault and crumbling. He wanted to reinforce them in order to avoid being outflanked but to do so he would need to pull troops from in front of Shuri Castle and thus invite a quick assault by the 77th Army Division and the 1st Marine Division. As such an attack could drive directly into his headquarters and end the battle he chose to

The struggle for the centre. *Above:* **Marines of the 7th Regiment, 1st Division photographed by Private J. A. Gudas on May 9 at the north-east end of Dakeshi Ridge.** *Below:* **Little similarity today to the battered hillside of 1945.**

keep his strong forces at Ishimmi and Wana Ridges. Consequently the American troops would batter against the main Shuri siege line for the remainder of the month of May and suffer terrible losses.

Wana Ridge runs east to west. On its eastern end is a mound which the Marines dubbed 100 Meter Hill. The reverse side of the ridge was deeply tunnelled and anti-tank guns and the cannons at Shuri covered the entire draw.

On May 14, General Del Valle sent the 7th Regiment across Dakeshi Draw in a head on charge against the north slope of Wana Ridge. Led by tanks of Colonel Arthur J. (Jeb) Stuart, the 1st Regiment circled around the western end of Wana Ridge and attacked the wide mouth of the draw.

Both regiments were hit with artillery, mortars, machine guns and grenades. Marines dropped like flies. Two tanks were struck by 47mm anti-tank guns and disabled. Neither regiment made any headway and nightfall found them back in their original positions, huddling miserably in rain-filled foxholes.

For the next two weeks, north Wana Ridge, Wana Draw, south Wana Ridge, the demolished city of Shuri and Shuri Castle Ridge were pounded by battleships, battalions of artillery, dozens of Avenger torpedo-bombers (used as dive-bombers) and Corsairs dropping napalm and firing rockets and .50-caliber machine guns. Each time there was a lull in the bombardment the Leathernecks would push into the draw behind their tanks. They would fight all day and then those that were able would crawl back to their original positions. Wana Draw was like a living creature. It breathed fire from hundreds of caves and tunnels. whenever one was blown shut, steel would pour from ten others. Disabled tanks and dead, rotting Marines and Japanese littered the churned up mud and floated in the stream which flowed through the center of the draw. It looked like World War I all over again.

On May 19 the 1st Regiment shifted over to the left and replaced the decimated 7th Regiment. The 5th Regiment replaced the 1st Regiment and maintained the attack up the mouth of Wana Draw. Torrential rains continued falling and nothing could move

The exposed reverse face of Wana Draw riddled with hundreds of caves — each spewing forth streams of lead.

Incongruous yet appropriate. Still plenty of exposure for streams of a different kind in this open air urinal!

Above: **The desolation of Wana Draw — with Wana Ridge to the left and 100 Meter Hill on the right. The stream bed lies to the left of the Sherman which has lost its turret. Charles Leonard remembers passing this tank in 1945 on his march south to Shuri Castle Hill.** *Below:* **Now a park with the stream running between concrete-lined banks on the other side of the wall. At the top right of picture — 100 Meter Hill.**

except the foot soldier. On all fronts the American advance was halted. The downpour turned Wana Draw into a muddy lake in which tanks became useless. While the soldiers and Marines on the east and west coasts were supplied by amphibious tractors, those in the centre, fronting Shuri, received no supplies until chains of replacement troops were formed. These human pack-mules carried food and ammunition for two miles through the knee-deep mud to keep the front line Americans from running out of rations and ammunition. When the human supply system began to break down due to fatigue, Avenger torpedo-bombers were loaded with food and ammunition which were parachuted into the front lines. By the end of the campaign more than 560 planeloads of supplies had been air dropped.

On May 28 the weather cleared for one day and the 1st Marine Regiment again attacked Wana Ridge and 100 Meter Hill. Bitter hand-to-hand fighting took place all day but at dusk the Marines were again driven back. It had been a costly day for both sides and Americans and Japanese began to believe that Wana Draw would eventually kill them all.

While the battles for Wana Draw and Ishimmi Ridge were going on, General Ushijima became concerned about his flanks. The US 7th Army Division had captured Yonabaru and was driving west. The 6th Marine Division had captured Naha and was driving east. Ushijima had to make a decision. Either he stood his ground and was enveloped or he retreated to his previously-prepared, defensive position in the southern portion of the island.

The weather made up his mind for him. On May 26, in a downpour which kept most American planes grounded, the Japanese Thirty-second Army began to pull out of its Shuri line. All roads leading south from the old capital city were clogged with soldiers and civilians. When the Americans learned of this, all available fire support ships were committed to destroying the retiring forces. The resulting barrage turned the retreat into a carnage and unfortunately thousands of civilians were slaughtered along with Japanese soldiers.

Ushijima had left a strong rearguard in and about the Shuri – Wana – Ishimmi area and they fought off repeated attacks by the 77th Infantry Division and the 1st Marine Division.

On May 29 the 5th Marine Regiment probed toward Shuri Castle Ridge from the west. Meeting litle resistance the 1st Battalion advanced eastward up the ridge past the ruins of the Japanese barracks and occupied the

Above: **Naha falls to the Marines of the 6th Division. One of the few buildings still standing was the old police station.** *Below:* **Thirty-eight years on it still remains, hemmed in by the trappings of the 1980s.**

rubble that had, at one time, been Shuri Castle. Captain Julian Dusenburg did not have an American flag. So, being from North Carolina he raised the Confederate flag instead. Seeing the Stars and Bars of the Confederacy flying from atop the pile of limestone blocks, the Japanese rearguard slipped through a gap in the lines and fled southward to join the remnants of their army. With the rearguard gone, the Shuri line collapsed and was quickly overrun by the 77th and 1st Divisions.

Pursuit of General Ushijima was slow, principally because the Army and Marine divisions were seriously understrength and weary. The sieges of Kakazu, Urasoe-Mura, Maeda, Sugar Loaf, Conical Hill, Dakeshi and Wana had left thousands of dead and wounded infantrymen behind. The first days of June were spent assimilating replacements, blowing caves, getting resupplied and making preparations to launch the final assault.

General Buckner took stock of his situation. Nearly twelve inches of rain had fallen during the last few days of May and the supply routes were in a shambles. Trucks had to be dragged by winches through innumerable bogs on Route 5, the main north-south road, but he dare not give the enemy too much time to organize defenses in the new siege line, four miles south from Shuri. He sent elements of the 1st Marine Division and the 7th and 96th Divisions in pursuit.

Approximately three miles from the southern tip of Okinawa loomed the largest coral, limestone escarpment yet encountered. As usual it lay in an east to west direction and, like the Urasoe-Mura escarpment, it was faced by a wide open valley and had, in many places, reverse ridge geography ideal to cave defense. The escarpment was another Urasoe-Mura, a series of steep ridges and hills separated by high saddles.

In the US 7th Infantry sector stood Hill 95 which sloped down to the Pacific Ocean and was manned by the remnants of the 44th Independent Mixed Brigade. West of Hill 95 was a steep ridge line which rose to a towering 170-foot peak. This was called Yaeju Dake by the Japanese but the 96th Division which had to capture it labeled it simply 'The Big Apple'. A massive saddle lay between it and the next ridge Yuza Dake. From Yuza Dake the escarpment was called Kunishi Ridge and sloped toward the East China Sea near the major southern port city of Itoman. Yaeju and Yuza Dake lay within the boundaries of the US 96th Division while Kunishi Ridge belonged to the 1st Marine Division.

This last east-west siege line was even more fearsome looking than those which had preceeded it. The cave and pillbox defenses of this area had been constructed by the trained engineers of the departed Japanese 9th Division. The Yaeju Dake, Yuza Dake, Kunishi Ridge area was defended by the remnants of the 24th Division. Whatever efficiency had been lost through attrition was made up for by the strength and protection afforded by the last siege line. It was a coral and limestone fortress, well supplied with weapons. The Japanese had lost most of their large caliber cannons but had plenty of 47mm anti-tank guns and mortars. The 47mm had

Another remarkable landmark is this stone torii — complete with bullet marks — which still straddles the road between the harbour and airport. Now flanked by an ice-cream shop on one side and a Colonel Sanders chicken restaurant on the other!

The ruins of Shuri Castle, General Ushijima's headquarters during the two-month Shuri line battles. It was here on May 21, deep in his command cave beneath the castle, that the General decided to retreat south to a new prepared defensive line rather than fight to the death at Shuri. Although the 290-acre castle grounds were reached by the Americans on May 29, the last of the Japanese did not slip away from the area until the night of May 30-31.

proven to be an excellent anti-infantry weapon as well as a tank destroyer. Tons of supplies had been stockpiled in the caves by the 9th Division. The Japanese were ready. As in the past, the terrain dictated that the Americans must come to them, out in the open devoid of protection. As far as the Japanese were concerned they knew that there was no place left to go — their 30,000 backs were to the sea. They were badly battered but had not lost their fanatical will to resist. There they waited patiently in their deep, dry holes . . . ready for the last onslaught.

Behind the lines and across the estuary from the smashed city of Naha lay Oroku penninsula. The defenders of Orokyu consisted of the 5,000 sailors and marines of the Naval Base Force, commanded by Rear Admiral Minoru Ota. Although several thousand men from his original force had gone south, Admiral Ota had not retreated but had chosen to fight to the death in the positions he had previously prepared. The troops were well stocked with food, ammunition and weapons. They had also removed machine guns from the wrecked planes strewn around the Naha airfield and were ready to die.

With the capture of Naha, the 6th Marine Division had been pinched out of the line and was available for an amphibious landing and, at 4.45 a.m. on June 4, the 4th Regiment rumbled ashore on Oroku, meeting minimal resistance. Admiral Ota had chosen to follow Ushijima's strategy and let the Leathernecks land. His forces were concentrated in a small hilly area near his deep tunnelled headquarters cave at the south-east corner of the penninsula near Tomagasuku. For ten days the battle raged. It was principally man and machine against the caves. The Marines called it 'blowtorch' and 'corkscrew'. Blowtorch was the use of flame throwers, both hand-carried and by the use of tanks especially equipped to shoot long lances of flame, while corkscrew was the use of high explosives to blow in caves and pillboxes.

When the battle ended on June 14 all but two hundred of the Japanese defenders of Oroku had been killed. Admiral Ota and his staff had committed suicide deep in the underground HQ of the Okinawa Naval Base force. When the Marines finally located his headquarters they were astounded at the cave complex. More than 1,500 feet of tunnels connected dozens of rooms which were well ventilated, equipped with electricity and had concrete walls and doorways. The headquarters had also served as a hospital but all of the wounded had killed themselves. The Leathernecks found more than two hundred bodies, including Admiral Ota.

Today what was the seat of the Kings of Okinawa between 1166 and 1879 is being rebuilt — the gateway in the outer wall on the right providing the link. New trees and shrubs prevent a wide angle shot.

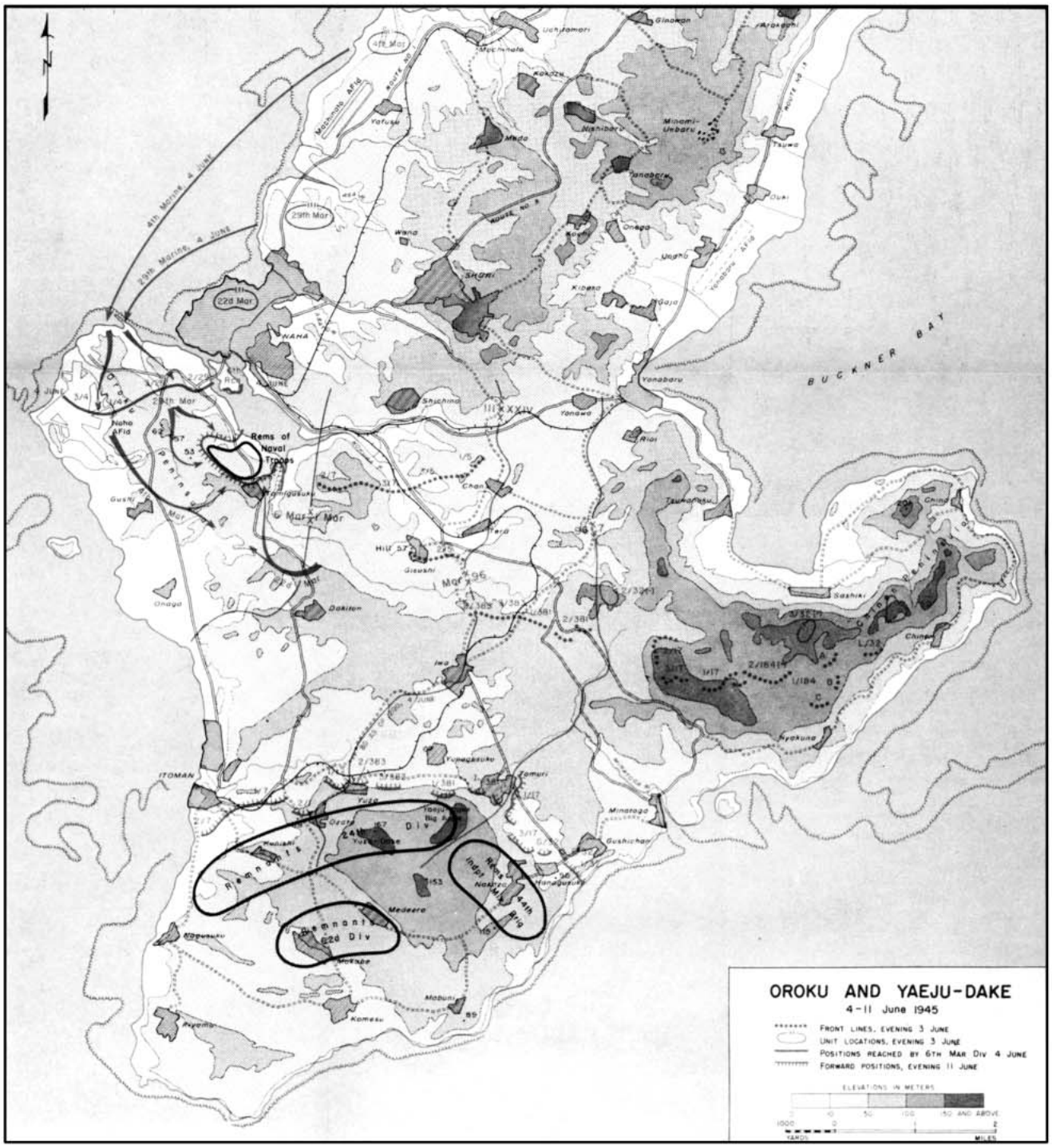
Oroku had been secured at a cost of 1,608 Marine casualties. Thirty Sherman tanks had been destroyed or put out of action. More than 4,000 Japanese had died.

While the 6th Marine Division was capturing Oroku penninsula, the 1st Marine Division was sealing off the southern base of the penninsula and heading south toward their new assignment, the assault of the heavily defended outposts before Kunishi Ridge and then the taking of the ridge itself.

By June 6 the Tenth Army was drawn up in a line across the island facing the deeply dug-in remnants of the Japanese force — some 30,000 men all told. On the left, the US 7th Division made some progress against Hill 95. In the center the 96th division was repulsed and bloodied when it tried to advance past the City of Iwa (Kochinda) while, on the west coast, the 1st Marine Division stood poised above the major port city of Itoman.

June 8 saw all three divisions on the move. The 7th Division made nominal advances and by June 9 was at the base of the eastern anchor of the Yaeju Dake - Yuza Dake - Kunishi Ridge siege line. In the center the 96th Division sent reinforced companies out into the exposed valley and, after several days of fighting, was forced back with heavy casualties, including eight men who were trapped in enemy territory near the base of Yaeju Dake. Three of them were killed and the remainder who were wounded hid out until June 14. The 1st Marine Division assaulted the heavily defended outpost positions on Yuza Hill and Hill 59, facing Kunishi Ridge. Losses were high across the entire front. There seemed to be no weak spots in the massive east-west escarpment. Soldiers and Marines who ventured out into the valley were cut to pieces. Tanks were hit and exploded into flaming coffins for their trapped crews.

Air strikes were called. Dozens of Marine Corsair fighters and Avenger bombers


OROKU AND YAEJU-DAKE
4-11 June 1945
FRONT LINES, EVENING 3 JUNE
UNIT LOCATIONS, EVENING 3 JUNE
POSITIONS REACHED BY 6TH MAR DIV 4 JUNE
FORWARD POSITIONS, EVENING 11 JUNE
ELEVATIONS IN METERS
BUCKNER BAY
4th Mar
29th Mar
22d Mar
Naha
Shuri
Yonabaru
Chinen
Kyoda
Sashiki
Tsukasan
Yonaha
Shuchina
Gushichan
Minatoga
Tomuri
Yuza
Medeera
Mabuni
Komesu
Itoman
Oroku Pen
Naval Base Force
Rems of Naval Troops
Naha AFld
Machinato AFld
Kokuba
Yafuso
Minami-Ueharu
Nishiharu
Yonabaru
Wana
Shuri
Ozato
Gaja
Kibeta
Aja
Chan
Hill 37
Gisushi
Onaga
Dakiton
Iwa
Yonagusuku
Kyoda
Sashiki
Chinen
Tsukasan
Yonaha
Yonabaru
Gaja
Ozato

Above: **A 37mm anti-tank gun of the 17th Infantry Regiment, 7th Division, pounds the caves in the Yaeju Dake. This escarpment — to the Americans it was the 'Big Apple' — formed part of the final Japanese defence line — see map** *opposite. Below:* **Charles Leonard took his comparison from north of Tomori.**

plastered the front and top of the four-mile-long escarpment. Artillery thundered and tore huge chunks of coral loose but the Japanese were dug deep and the only effective killer was the napalm bomb. Every time the bombardment stopped and the infantry started forward, the ridges erupted with artillery, mortars, machine guns and hand grenades and the Americans were driven back. It was Kakazu, Urosoe-Mura, Sugar Loaf, Conical Hill and Wana Ridge all over again.

After two months of almost continuous fighting, few of the original riflemen who had landed on April 1 were still standing. In many line companies the casualties had been more than 100 per cent. Thousands of replacement troops from depots on Guam and Saipan had joined the decimated Marine and GI infantry platoons. Although there were hundreds of thousands of American troops on Okinawa, the vast majority were building facilities and airfields or driving trucks, maintaining supply dumps and stringing thousands of miles of telephone wire. It took at least six rear area soldiers to provide back up logistical service to keep one man in a mud-filled foxhole at the front. One sharp firefight could reduce a 200-man infantry company to a dozen men. This happened with horrible regularity on Okinawa. A steady supply of replacements was required to keep the battered companies in shape to continue the drive from to ridge to ridge and a rifleman could only expect to last about three weeks in combat before becoming a casualty. Some replacements died without firing a shot. Between April 1 and June 30, 1945, 12,277 replacements were sent to Army units and 11,147 to the Marines.

Commencing June 10 another all out attack was attempted. Everywhere on the front the Marines and soldiers battered at the heavily

Above: **June 10 — a patrol of the 381st Infantry (96th Division) advances against Big Apple.** *Below:* **Man and nature have combined to transform Okinawa since 1945 although Yaeju Dake has perhaps changed the least.**

defended outposts and the towering escarpments. On Hill 95 Captain Tony Niemeyer of the 7th Division rigged a 200-foot hose to a flame-throwing tank and dragged the pipe up the slope of the hill. There he sprayed liquid flame into caves and gullies. Then the infantrymen successfully attacked the eastern end of the hill. The 96th Division soldiers could only reach the base of the towering Yaeju Dake where they huddled in caves and ditches. The 1st Marine Division attacked Yuza Hill and lost 75 out of 175 men in one company including all officers.

On June 11 the 7th Division continued its painful advance on Hill 95 while the 96th Division drew a breath. the 1st Marine Division captured the west coast port city of Itoman and then sent the 2nd Battalion, 1st Regiment, against Hill 69 — the site of the remains of the ancient Nanzan Castle and the last major outpost facing Kunishi Ridge. Fighting all day and after losing three tanks and sustaining heavy casualties, E and F Companies captured the 1,000-yard long hill. This placed the Marine lines close to Kunishi Ridge and permitted a night attack by the 7th Marine Regiment across the 800 yards of open ground to the base of the ridge.

The morning of June 12 found the 96th Division moving through the lines of the 7th Division and attacking Yaeju Dake from the east while two regiments struggled unsuccessfully to make headway against Yuza Dake. The 383rd Regiment tried to capture the town of Ozato east of Hill 69 where the Marines held off several counter-attacks. Ozato had been occupied by Japanese engineers who had planted hundreds of anti-personnel mines. The 96th Division suffered so many casualities in and around Ozato that they had to bypass the town completely. Weeks later, after the island had been secured, American soldiers were still dying in Ozato.

By June 14 Yaeju Dake had been overrun and the Yuza Dake line was beginning to crumble. Hill 95 had fallen and the 7th Division was moving rapidly along the east coast toward the Japanese Army's last headquarters on the rugged coastline at Mabuni. At this point, the 1st Marine Division found its 1st and 7th Regiments trapped and cut off on Kunishi Ridge.

A significant feature everywhere are the caves . . . and the memorials. Those pictured here lie on top of the escarpment.

Lieutenant General Simon Buckner's Tenth Army HQ was located at Kadena airfield in the north, just behind the original landing beaches (see map page 3). On June 18 the General (right) came south to observe the final stages of the battle from an observation post on the Mezado Ridge.

With the party was Marine photographer Pfc. Frank Rogers, former staff photographer with the Detroit Westward. No sooner had he taken this picture than a shell burst knocked him flat. The General had been mortally wounded . . . it was to be the last photograph.

Japanese were everywhere. Reverse slope emplacements poured mortar shells into the depleted Leatherneck companies. The valley between Kunishi Ridge and Hill 69 was a total killing zone. Reinforcements could be brought up only by putting them inside tanks. Casualties were evacuated on the return trip. Unprotected Marines could not cross the 800 yards to help their trapped comrades, and without tank support it is doubtful that the ridge could have been held at all. An air drop fell into enemy lines.

On June 15 the 5th Regiment relieved the remnants of the 1st Regiment, which had lost more than 500 men during a ten-day period. Kunishi Ridge was finally secured on June 16.

Meanwhile, the 6th Marine Division was called down to the south and by June 18 both the 1st and 7th Regiments of the 1st Marine Division had been replaced by men of the 6th. The decimated 1st Marine Division had fought its final, and bloodiest battle of World War II.

On June 18, Lieutenant General Buckner came down to the southern battlefield to observe the 8th Marine Regiment. The 8th Marines were part of the 2nd Marine Division

The battle had but three days to run yet the General was not to see the final victory. Within minutes of being hit he had died. They buried him in the 7th Division cemetery in the company of the 1,122 lost by the division on Okinawa. He was the highest ranking American officer killed in action during WWII and a plaque was fixed to the boulder beside which he had been killed (fragments of this rock being blown into his chest) and a memorial erected. However, vandalism has caused both to be removed to within the confines of the American base at Camp Foster (*centre pages*).

General Ushijima's new headquarters were located in a system of caves below Hill 89 near Mabuni backing the sea on the south-east corner of the island. When the 32nd Infantry Regiment battled across the broad flat top of the hill on June 21 little did they know of the drama which was about to be enacted below them. At 4.00 a.m. on the 22nd, the General, together with his Chief of Staff, General Cho, led the way to the cave entrance. Just outside a sheet had been prepared and, following the ritual of the Samurai, both made the only acceptable atonement to their Emperor for failing to defend Okinawa. After the discovery of the bodies inside the cave *(above left)* the Americans buried them in shallow graves nearby *(above right)*. Today the spot marked with an imposing edifice is a venerated Japanese shrine *(see back cover)***.**

and had been called from Saipan to add fresh blood to the weary and weakened regiments of the 3rd Amphibious Corps. General Buckner hoped that the infusion of this veteran Leatherneck Regiment would provide the impetus to bring the long, costly campaign to a quick end. He wanted to see for himself. It was working. The 8th Regiment was wiping up the remnants of the Japanese 24th Division.

Before he arrived at an observation post near Mezado Ridge, General Buckner stopped to chat with Colonel Harold C. Roberts, Commander of the 22nd Marine Regiment, 6th Division. Colonel Roberts urged Buckner not to go any further. He warned that there was heavy fire being directed towards the Mezado area. General Buckner declined to accept this advice and continued on to the ridge lookout. He took a position behind two boulders and watched through a slit while a rifle company advanced ahead of him. Suddenly six 47mm anti-tank shells slammed into the rocks. General Buckner was struck in the chest and died quickly from loss of blood. An hour later Colonel Roberts was shot to death by a sniper.

In accordance with Buckner's previously-expressed wishes, Marine General Geiger was designated Commander of the Tenth Army. This was the first and, to date, only time a Marine officer was to lead a full United States Army. It was an appointment which was to last only four days by which time the Army had rushed in General Joseph W. Stilwell to replace Geiger. However, General Geiger and the gallent fighters of the Tenth got the job done before Stilwell arrived on June 23.

On June 19, General Ushijima sent a last message to his survivors praising them for their courage and sacrifice, the same day that the Americans lost another top officer. Brigadier General Claudius M. Easley, Assistant Commander of the 96th Army Division, was shot to death by a machine gunner while personally directing the attack of the 384th Infantry. He was a talented and highly respected commander of men and he died just three days before the island was secured.

The end was arriving swiftly for Generals Ushijima and Cho. On the evening of June 21, with soldiers of the 7th Division very near to the command cave at Mabuni, the Generals were served a sumptuous dinner. Before daylight, dressed in full field uniform with swords and medals, both officers knelt on a clean sheet, facing north toward the Imperial Palace. General Ushijima placed both hands on the hilt of a razor-sharp knife. As he plunged the blade into his abdomen his aide sliced his spinal cord with a single sabre stroke. General Cho followed his commander in death, as he had in life.

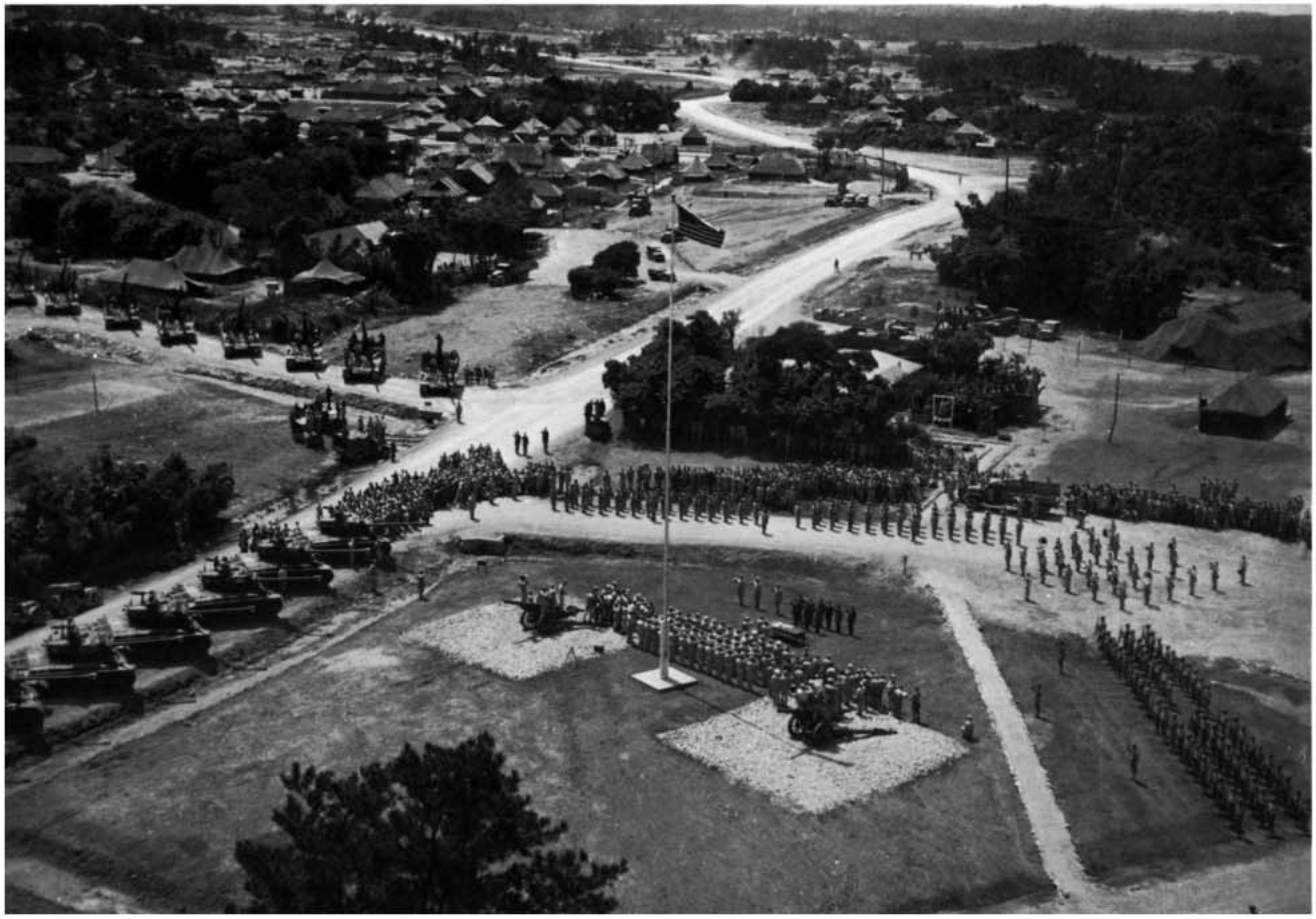
Soldiers of the 7th Division found the corpses and buried them in shallow graves near their headquarters cave. Cho had written his own epitaph: 'I depart without regret, shame or obligations'.

Ironically the commander of the US Tenth Army and the commander of the Thirty-second Japanese Army died within two miles of each other.

On June 22, 1945, General Geiger raised the American flag at Tenth Army headquarters near Kadena Airfield as the National Anthem was played by the 2nd Marine Air Wing. Although each of the divisions of the Army had a band, the local air wing was the only one available because the band members of each infantry division also served as stretcher-bearers and were still collecting wounded or they themselves were lying in a hospital or a cemetery. In a formal ceremony General Geiger announced that Okinawa had been secured.

Thus ended the battle of Okinawa which, for numbers of American and Japanese soldiers, sailors and marines involved, was the most costly Pacific campaign of World War II. For ferocity and inhumanity, it was, perhaps, the single most costly battle ever.

Eighteen miles to the north, at the Tenth Army HQ at Kadena, the notes of the Star Spangled Banner ring out as General Geiger announces the end of organised resistance. However it was to take another nine days and a further 783 American casualties to mop up throughout the island. Although precise totals vary, the final toll was the highest experienced in any campaign against the Japanese — over 12,500 killed or missing and 36,000 wounded with another 26,000 non-battle casualties. At sea kamikaze attacks had killed 3,593 with 5,538 sailors wounded.



On September 7, 1945, General Joseph Stilwell, the new Tenth Army commander, accepted the surrender of all the Ryukyu Islands from Admiral Tadao Kato in a formal ceremony held on the same spot where Okinawa had been declared secure on June 22. This photograph was taken by Lieutenant Strauch from the top of the rock overlooking the headquarters.

Okinawa was a ghastly portent of what the future invasion of the main islands of Japan held in store. Nevertheless, plans had to be immediately made to prepare for the assault. Then, with the day for the Kyushu operation drawing nearer, came the almost unbelievable news that the war was over. Okinawa was the last battle of WWII. The monument on the historic surrender spot, now within the US Kadena air base, provides a point of interest for these Japanese air force personnel.

A MARINE RETURNS

My recent visit to Okinawa fulfilled the promise I had made in 1945 as I watched the island disappear from view through the porthole of the hospital ship, USS *Samaritan*. It had started to rain again and the last I saw of Okinawa it was draped in mist, the heavy clouds clinging to the sharp points of the foreboding, deadly ridges which terraced the south. I was glad to be getting away alive but I knew I would be back. I owed it to Wayne Lyons, my good friend who is still listed as missing in action; to Bruce Mitchell who was shot to death on the last day our regiment was in action and who now lies in the Punchbowl Cemetery on Oahu, very near to the grave of war correspondent Ernie Pyle, and to all my other buddies from Platoons 790 and 791 of the US Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San

Top: **Charles Leonard, front row fourth from right; Dick Losier, centre row fifth from left.** *Below:* **May 28, 1945 and Marines of the 54th, 57th and 63rd Replacement Drafts join the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions on Okinawa. Charles was one of those in the 57th draft.**

The Hagushi landing beach south of Bolo Point today.

Diego, California. Many of them died on Okinawa. Most were wounded. A few had the good fortune not to be sent to the hell that was erupting in the southern part of that pulverized, decaying, fly blown, muddy island in the spring of 1945.

I was among the 2,500 young Marine riflemen replacements who were sent from Guam to Okinawa aboard the attack transport USS *Clinton* in late May 1945. We were the last group to join up in time to see considerable fighting in that final major battle of World War II. The records are not clear as to what happened to all of us but from my research it is a safe estimate that at least seventy per cent of the members of the 54th, 57th and 63rd replacement drafts became casualties.

Okinawa today is considerably changed, especially around the present capital of Naha and the ancient capital city of Shuri. In other areas to the south it is not much different than 1945, except for the heavy vegetation which now covers the battlefields.

Naha was flattened during the war. Today it is a teeming city of high rise buildings, swarming population and thousands of automobiles. It has sprawled out in all directions. While staying at the Okinawa Hilton, north of Naha, I left my rented car at the hotel when I went to downtown Naha. It was easier to take a bus or a cab than to risk your life trying to maneuver on the wrong side of the road (for an American) among the 'Kamikaze' Okinawan drivers. I found the Okinawans to be friendly and courteous but their driving habits are suicidal.

During the war I had spent my first two days on the island at a place called Kakazu West. I did not know its significance at the time because I was mostly trying to stay alive and keep dry while struggling through the mud, hand carrying food and ammunition to the weary men of the 1st Marine division who were still trying to capture Wana Draw, two miles south of Kakazu. When I went back there I was able to locate the tomb which my buddy Dick Losier and I had crawled into at the foot of the ridge. I recalled that the Marine Corps had sent us replacements to within two miles of the front lines without ammunition but we found plenty of .30-caliber rounds for our Garand rifles and lots of hand grenades in the tomb. This particular tomb had been used a month earlier by Pfc. Beaufort Anderson, one of the 96th Division's two recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor awarded for his single-handedly holding off a major Japanese counter-attack. However I did not know that then.

There were two tombs. Only one remains today. The other had recently been dug out and replaced with a rugged, reinforced concrete mausoleum. The rocks from the replaced tomb are still piled near the old

Above: **The saddle between Kakazu West and Kakazu Ridge photographed in 1945. It was through here that the Japanese advanced on the night of April 12-13 when they were halted by S/Sgt Beaufort T. Anderson of the 1st Battalion of the 381st Infantry. Ordering his men to stay under cover in the tomb on the left, he advanced throwing grenades. When these were exhausted he turned to mortar shells, banging the projectile against a rock to release the pin before throwing fourteen of them by hand in the midst of the enemy. The same tomb was used by Charles Leonard a month later — in April 1983 he returned to the spot to find the tomb entrance sealed.**

tomb. I knew that I was in the right place when my friend Jim Lea and his fiancée Juko first drove me to Kakazu but our time that day was limited and I couldn't find the deep gorge which cost the lives of so many US soldiers. It was not until my second attempt a few days later when I climbed to the top of Kakazu West that I found it. Thirty-eight years ago the entire area had been stripped of trees and foliage by bombardment and fire bombs. Today it looks like a jungle but the gorge was there still . . . just where it belonged . . . just as I saw it in my youth. The north side of the gorge is still being undercut by the stream that runs through it — the same creek where Losier and I washed the mud off our uniforms. I never told Losier that I had discovered a half-dozen bloated Japanese corpses bobbing upstream. Dead bodies had become common place in those dreadful days. Today a Coca Cola plant sits on top of Kakazu West and a steel trestle bridge carries Highway 330 across the gorge.

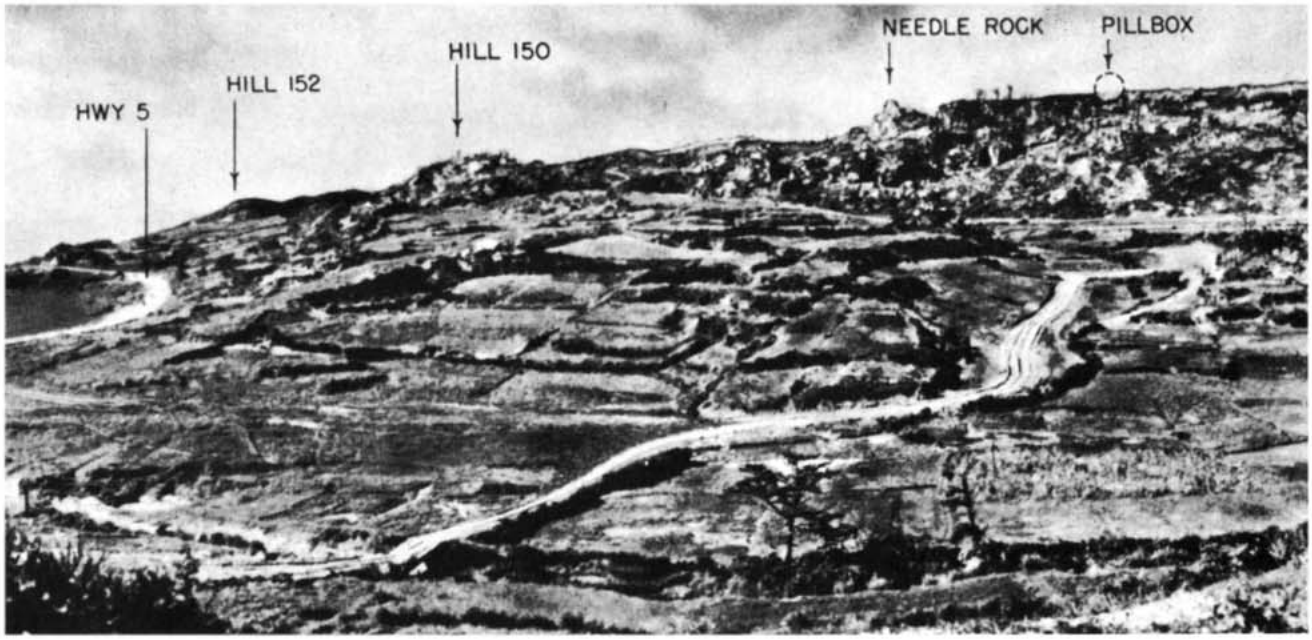
The Urasoe-Mura escarpment is still as forbidding as ever. It rises threateningly above the Kakazu area, its high peaks stabbing at the sky. In 1945 a row of shattered tree trunks stood atop the ridge like a scattering of toothpicks. At the time I knew that this had been a violent place but not until years later did I learn just what had happened to thousands of American and Japanese soldiers in this rugged terrain several weeks before I arrived. I remember looking at the tree stumps my second night on Okinawa and wondering what was on the other side. Two 105mm mobile howitzers were keeping us awake by hurtling shells over the ridge and I expected thousands of little yellow men to suddenly appear on the horizon amidst the stumps. Today it is all so peaceful. The stumps are gone. Trees, parks and dozens of new tombs now dot the crest and sides of Urasoe-Mura Ridge. A park also sits atop Kakazu Ridge and a sign tells the present day visitor what happened there.

To the east, where Urasoe-Mura becomes Maeda Ridge, the cliffs are even steeper and the escarpment ends at a place where a large rock stands prominently. This is the rock that the men of the 77th and 96th Army Divisions called Needle Rock. The ground around it is fertilized with their blood. Today Needle Rock still overlooks Route 5, the old highway to Shuri. I stood at its base and looked at Nishibaru and Tanabaru escarpments through my binoculars. There are many buildings scattered around and new tombs by the hundreds are growing under Maeda Ridge and Needle Rock, yet I could find no traces of the terrible fighting. Man, nature, and time had erased all the evidence.

South of Urasoe-Mura is Dakeshi Ridge where the 7th Marine Regiment bled. The draw between Dakeshi Ridge and the north

The peace and tranquility of a tropical park — Kakazu Gorge. When Charles Leonard stood on this same spot in 1945 it was completely stripped of vegetation — a hell hole where so many men died and were incapacitated, like this soldier being helped to an aid station by a corpsman on April 20.

The Maeda escarpment with eastern Kakazu and Highway 5 in the foreground. It was along this road on April 19 that thirty Shermans advanced and turned right towards the village — twenty-two were destroyed. Compare with the 1945 shot below taken slightly further away.



side of Wana Ridge is now difficult to get to. In 1945 it was a mud hole with a swollen stream pouring through it. Today the stream gurgles quietly, its sides reinforced with concrete to prevent erosion. The draw is now used mostly for agriculture. Dakeshi village (now called Tukashi) has spread out and covers the entire top of the ridge. I did, however, find the approximate spot where I buried forty Japanese soldiers who had died counter-attacking the 7th Marines on top of Dakeshi. That area is now a thriving vegetable garden.

Across from Dakeshi Ridge is the north side of Wana Ridge. It was here that Losier and I joined the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, late in May 1945. It was here that we volunteered to be bazookamen and were assigned to the 2nd Platoon of F Company. The 2nd Platoon was led by Lieutenant Martel. It was from here that we moved into Wana Draw, and if ever there was an evil place it was Wana Draw in May 1945. As I stood in the same draw in April 1983 and watched the Japanese elementary school children playing 'All Fall Down', it was easy to believe that there was no spot more peaceful in the whole world. Wana Draw is now a beautiful park and botanical garden. Dozens of varieties of flowers, shrubs and trees flourish. The steep grass-covered southern flank of the valley has been carefully terraced for picnicers and heavy jungle foliage hides the scars of war on the northern ridge.

When I last saw Wana Draw the Okinawa campaign had been rumbling along violently for almost two months and the 1st Marine Division had suffered heavy casualties. My first two days on rain swept Okinawa had consisted of repeated trips over the narrow, muddy two-mile trail from Kakazu to the north ridge of Wana Draw. A thousand young, physically toughened Marines were being used to supply food and ammunition to the hungry, tired men fighting to take the draw from the Japanese. The 1st, 5th, and 7th Regiments had suffered major losses and needed replacements. They also needed ammunition and food. So, we carried it to them on our backs.

Wana Draw. It was here that Charles Leonard first joined the battalion — the scars of war are now masked by the jungle.

Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima, commander of the 110,000 men of the Japanese force, had chosen that time to begin the retreat from his Shuri Castle fortress. Four miles distant on the southern end of the island, he had previously prepared major defensive positions in the series of high hills and ridges which run in a curved line across the island from east to west. My regiment remained behind for several days, destroying small pockets of Japanese resistance and tidying up the battle area.

When I entered Wana Draw for the first time it looked like the pictures I had seen of trench fighting in World War I. Rotting, fly-blown bodies of Japanese and Marines lay everywhere. A half-dozen knocked out tanks sat forlornly, their 75mm guns pointed at odd angles. The torrent of rain which had fallen on the island for the past three weeks had turned the churned up ground into a mush of watery, oozing pools from which protruded tree stubs, pieces of rifles, helmets, ration cans, rusting bayonets, and, of course, the inevitable arms, legs, and skulls of those who had fallen. Swarms of big, blue flies identified the places where the dead lay. It was difficult to tell friend from foe, particularly if death had occurred several weeks past. The dank draw smelled of decaying bodies and putrid mold.

The first body I approached I identified as a Marine, only because of the distinctive camouflaged helmet cover (worn only by Marines during World War II) and because he was wearing leggings. Maggots covered his face and slushed down his arm into the mud. The contrast between the vile mass of swarming white insects and the orange-brown coral clay into which they spilled was sickening. I tried as tenderly as possible to lift the Marine onto a stretcher. His eyes and mouth were open and filled with the vile offspring of the blue-black flies. I attempted not to look at his face. The smell gagged me but I overcame my revulsion and, as gently as I could, rolled him onto the stretcher, struggling to keep the decayed body in one piece and to avoid touching the maggots. I noticed that the buckles on his leggings were pulled tight and that the canvas was neatly laced. Half consciously I looked at my own leggings. They were the same. I covered him with his poncho.

The next corpse was that of a Japanese soldier. He, too, was crawling with maggots. He was lying on his back and his face looked like someone had poured a bucket of rice over it. Except that the rice was alive, moving, pulsing. I hastily shovelled mud on him until the obscene mass was completely beneath the clay.

I spent most of the day burying rotting enemy soldiers in the Wana and Dakeshi area. I helped recover several more Marine bodies and parts of bodies. I then headed south with my regiment.

The Okinawa campaign is probably the least known, remembered or comprehended of the major World War II battles. Even today, the young men and women of the US 3rd Marine Division which is stationed on the island do not really understand what happened there during April, May and June 1945 while the rest of the Allied world was preparing for, and celebrating, VE-Day.

During my trip I spent most of one morning talking to Sergeant Charles R. Brandt attached to the division. He was amazed to learn of the fighting that had occurred within a short distance of where we chatted for there are few remaining signs of that struggle on Okinawa today. Although the Japanese have raised hundreds of memorials and tombs to their dead, as can be expected, unless one can read Japanese, the average American has no idea what the markings on the limestone or concrete markers say. The only tribute to American dead that I could find was the General Buckner rock and plaque and the Ernie Pyle monument.

Sergeant Brandt was surprised to learn that the battle had been a no-quarter contest; that American Marines and soldiers had often engaged in hand-to-hand fighting and, except for the last week of the battle, that the Japanese had refused to surrender, choosing instead to stay deep in their caves until they were blown to pieces, entombed forever, or burned to death. He shook his head when I informed him that, despite the fact that American lines had been overrun on several occasions, not a single American prisoner-of-war was ever found alive. Two hundred thirty-nine Americans are listed as missing in action. One of them is my friend, Wayne Lyons. By the same token, my young Marine friend was not surprised to learn that the hatred on the battlefield resulted in few Japanese prisoners being taken. This distressed unit commanders who needed live enemy soldiers for interrogation.

As I stood in Wana Draw on April 1, 1983, I recalled how on May 29, 1945 my friend Dick Losier and I had committed an offense against Marine tradition: we had volunteered to be bazookamen. Wise Marines never volunteer! We unwisely believed that this would not only permit us to see action but would also make us specialists, with, perhaps, some additional benefits. As it turned out we served not only as bazookamen but riflemen as well. Our only extra benefit was being near our platoon commander, Lieutenant Martel, and thus occasionally getting first chance at the C-ration issue. Instead of spaghetti and meatballs or Australian mutton stew I was

Just a little grassy hillside amongst the encroaching man-made jungle of concrete but beneath its surface lies a cave from which a badly-wounded Japanese soldier once emerged. When he unsuccessfully tried to commit suicide a Marine corporal finished him off.

periodically able to get my favorite, weenies and beans. I still like them. I eat them now, warmed up, not clammy cold with the rain water running off my nose into the can.

Losier and I were issued a battered bazooka with a broken sight and eight rockets in a golf bag. We were ready for war.

Today as I walked across the draw I remembered what it had looked like thirty-eight years before. I remembered the Sherman which had its turret blown off. It lay upside down next to the body of the tank and looked like a broken toy. But, unlike a toy, I knew Marines had died inside that war machine. I remembered the muddy stream running down the middle of the draw and the bodies floating in it. Today that same stream has concrete sides to prevent erosion and thus keep the park neat and tidy. I remembered the Japanese soldier who staggered out of a cave in the south ridge and begged for a drink. His leg wound was gangrenous and crawling with maggots. After he was given some water he asked for my knife and tried to kill himself. When he only succeeded in slicing two superficial cuts across his stomach a young Marine corporal glanced angrily over at a row of seven stretchers containing poncho-wrapped dead Marines and, raising his carbine, fired six bullets into the Japanese soldier.

This had all occurred approximately where the school children were now happily playing, glancing shyly at me while I snapped their picture. Although most of us disapproved of what the corporal had done, we knew that he was one of the 'old timers' and that among the bodies we had brought out were his friends. We also knew the Japanese did not take prisoners. We turned away and joined our outfits.

The 2nd Battalion gathered its gear and headed for Shuri Castle Ridge. Losier and I stumbled along behind the Lieutenant. Both of us were heavily weighed down. I had the bazooka, my rifle, 140 rounds of ammunition, three fragmentation grenades, one white phosphorous grenade, my backpack, helmet, two combat knives and one stainless steel soup spoon which I used to eat from the C-ration cans. I was wearing my camouflaged poncho and leaning into the wind and rain. As we climbed the south side of Wana Draw, passing close to the dead tank I could see the jagged ruins of the reinforced steel and concrete Japanese barracks in the distance on Shuri Castle Hill.

Today the path up from the creek seems steeper than it was during those violent times but then I am older and the intervening years have been less kind to me physically than they have been to Wana Draw. Wana Draw looks like the Garden of Eden with fresh, flowering plants and the clean, clear stream bubbling down from 100 Meter Hill.

Before crossing the sturdy, new, wooden bridge, I attempted to climb to the top of 100 Meter Hill at the head of the draw. I was turned back by jungle growth so thick that it could be penetrated only if I had a sharp machete. After suffering bites from mosquitos, spiders and large black ants and being sickened by the three-inch slugs which regularly dropped on my head and neck, I gave up and retraced my steps to the park. In 1945 every piece of foliage had been blasted and burned off of 100 Meter Hill.

I climbed the steps to the top of the south ridge, where I hesitated, waiting for a break in the mass of cars roaring east and west along the busy road which now crosses the crown of the ridge. In late May 1945 nothing moved in this area except the wind, the rain and 900 grumbling, muddy, wet Marines of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Regiment.

Today, after hurrying across the road, I dropped down the other side of the ridge and headed toward Shuri Castle Hill in the distance. I followed the same street which still veers in a south-westerly direction through thickly populated Shuri. when I crossed this ground in 1945 no buildings were standing. Decaying bodies lay everywhere. The stench had gagged me. Except for our column of Marines and several barking dogs, nothing moved. I remember seeing a black, battered 1940 Chevrolet and a hand-operated fire pumper, its hoses sprawled impotently. I remember thinking that such an ancient piece of equipment would have been of little use during the fire storm that had swept Shuri.

Wana Draw today is 'a Garden of Eden'. The steps leading to the top of Wana Ridge mark the same approximate route taken by Charles in 1945 — 100 Meter Hill lies just out of the photo to the left.

Not much chance of exact comparison photographs in Shuri today! Prosperous development has completey masked the scene that confronted Charles Leonard and his 2nd Battalion.

Above: **Looking south from South Wana Ridge. The ruin of the Japanese barracks can be seen in the top middle skyline.**
Below: **The view north from the top of Shuri Castle Hill.**

As the 2nd Battalion moved toward an exposed ridge near the base of Shuri Castle Hill, the word was passed down the line not to bunch up. There were still Japanese soldiers scattered in the ruins of the castle grounds and our column was a good target for mortars. We grunted up a switchback and for the first time had a good view of the ruins of the barracks to our right. At the time I had no idea that I was about to enter the grounds of a stone castle built in the thirteenth century which for the first two months of battle had been the headquarters of General Ushijima and the staff of the Thirty-second Japanese Army. As most foot soldiers know, the word does not often filter down to the guy who does the fighting. All Losier and I knew was that we had just passed through a flattened city called Shuri and had labored up a steep switchback near a crumbling concrete, two-story building.

After passing the barracks we were told to spread out and dig in. Losier and I selected a spot slightly north-east of the barracks. We commenced to dig a foxhole in front of the tangled remains of a wire and wood fence. On the other side of the fence the ground dropped down sharply to a large flat area covered with a lot of debris, churned up mud and tree stumps.

When I reached the barracks site recently I learned that the foxhole Losier and I dug was, in fact, very near to the old ceremonial gate which led to the first gate to the castle grounds. The churned up area was the location of a sacred grove of trees which was

called So No Hyan Utaki. Here in olden times the King's sister had lived and prayed for a safe trip whenever the King journeyed from the castle. The So No Hyan Utaki gate today is in the process of being rebuilt.

During the war the ceremonial gate called Shurei-No-Mon (Gate of Eternal Courtesy) had been blown up by the 16-inch guns of several battleships. It was restored in 1958 and is now the unofficial symbol of Okinawa. It is very beautiful and I watched as dozens of Japanese tourists had their pictures taken with the kimono clad, pretty girls who added a realistic touch to this striking historical reproduction.

I remember how cold it was on the hill in 1945. The 5th Marine Regiment had captured the castle heights a few days before but there were still many Japanese stragglers scattered about. They were remnants of the rear guard. Since the muddy roads remained impassible the Marines on the ridge had been supplied by parachute drops from low flying Avengers. As I huddled in my foxhole in the cold rain I heard a Marine tell his buddy that there were several nylon parachutes at the end of the ridge. Knowing they provided excellent protection against the rain, I picked up my rifle and set out to find one. I crossed a stretch of debris, climbed a wide path made of pine logs laid side by side, and swung down toward a ravine. On my left was a high rocky wall

'My outfit', comments Charles on the back of this picture showing the battered remains of the barracks. Today the site is occupied by an abandoned dormitory of the university. The road leads up to the Shurei-No-Mon gate.

The gate is now the unofficial symbol of Okinawa — completely demolished in 1945 and painstakingly rebuilt in 1958. The

foxhole dug by Charles and Dick Losier was located approximately where the umbrella stands.

Above: **The former King's Castle at Shuri.** *Below:* **The wooden building was completely flattened during the naval and air bombardment which preceeded the attack on the hill. Here an Avenger torpedo-bomber drops supplies to 1st Division Marines on top of Castle Hill. The 'clearing' is the site of the main castle buildings.**

Today Shuri Castle Ridge is a ghost town. In the 1950s the United States Government cleared away the ruins of the castle and built the University of the Ryukyus. Okinawa reverted to Japan in 1972 and in March 1981 the Japanese Government decided to move the university several miles north near Nishibaru. During the past two years dozens of multi-storied, reinforced concrete university class rooms and dormitories have fallen into decay and are scheduled to be torn down.

As I wandered around the university grounds it was almost as if time had stood still. It was raining and I was alone. The last time I had been in this area everything was in disarray and, except for the drumming of the rain on my helmet, there had been no other sounds on this forbidding hilltop. Today I found myself in much the same situation. This time the rain was soaking my civilian clothing and I was unarmed. Instead of an M-1 rifle I had two cameras. The wind was whistling through the broken windows of the decaying buildings and I was becoming apprehensive. Old memories were being stirred and as I passed near the site of the artillery positions, I half expected to hear the rattlesnake hum of the Nambu machine gun. I crossed the road and climbed up to the top of the ridge. I found

which I later realized was the southern wall of the castle grounds. To my right was a torn up grove of trees with the mangled remains of several Japanese trucks. As I approached the ravine I could see a parachute hanging from the stub of a tree about 200 yards away. The ravine was narrow and ominous. Several dead Japanese soldiers sprawled at its head. Rangefinders, binoculars and other artillery equipment was scattered all around. As I left the draw I saw a steep hill to my right with several abandoned cannons and numerous caves. I stopped and bent over to examine an American Garand rifle. I saw some tell-tale yellow insulated Japanese wire protruding from under the stock of the rifle. I suspicioned that it was a booby trap and did not touch it. As I started to straighten up a Japanese machine gun fired a volley which richocheted all around me, bouncing off the shattered boulders of the high wall. I dropped flat and fired an eight-round clip in the general direction of the enemy. I was all alone in deep trouble. The parachute now became of little importance. I crawled back through the mud to the ravine and then ran hurriedly to where the 2nd Battalion was spread out and digging in. I was glad to be safely back with my comrades.

Although Shuri Castle was a venerated seat of Okinawan culture, in the 1950s the US administration built the University of the Ryukyus on the site. After the island was handed back to Japan in 1972, plans were made to build a new university at Nishibaru, near Kakazu, in order that the complete castle and grounds could be rebuilt and reinstated. At the present time the university buildings are derelict and due for demolition.

Nearby was located the Tama-o-don, the Royal Mausoleum, the burial place of the Okinawan kings since 1501. Protected by double lines of two-metre-thick walls, the centre building was for washing the bones while that on the left contained the remains of the kings and queens. The one on the right was provided for princes and princesses. This picture was taken on May 29, 1945 just after its capture by 1st Division Marines.

myself in front of the abandoned university administration building which was once the site of the Shuri Castle Throne Room. This was the highest point on the ridge and I could picture General Ushijima standing there watching the American troops as they closed in on his castle fortress. It was probably from very near to this spot where he had made the decision to abandon the Shuri Line.

I wandered through the deserted castle-cum-university grounds shaking my head at the thought of the many millions of dollars that American taxpayers had spent to build this huge white elephant only to have it abandoned nine years after Okinawa reverted to Japan. In fairness, the Japanese decision was based primarily upon a desire to rebuild the entire castle, including its massive walls, gates, and the many parks, temples and shrines. We probably had no business constructing a university on such an important location in the first place.

I wandered down past the Shurei-No-Mon gate to the former site of the battered Japanese military barracks. Several multi-story abandoned university dormitories now occupy this place. I walked to the end of the old parade ground and looked over the edge of the steep bank to the south remembering how Losier, Filler and I had struggled down that slope and located a shack full of trays of lead type used by printers. I guess it was then a military press room used by the Japanese soldiers who formerly occupied the barracks. Outside lay two dead enemy soldiers and a woman. After discovering that we were crawling with fleas we hastily returned to our unit and picked the insects off each other.

Today while standing alone looking toward where the old press room had been, I was approached by an Okinawan teenager who tried to communicate with me. He said, 'Hello', and I said 'Konichi Wa'. I guess that exhausted his English and my Japanese. We then smiled and he returned to an area of deep grass behind the decaying dormitory from which came laughter and noisy conversation. I can only surmise that some young people were doing a little serious drinking in a very remote area and that my sudden appearance had startled them. After checking me out and finding me harmless they returned to their fun. I am sure that they had no idea of who I was or of what had brought me to that desolate spot.

Since the war a careful job of reconstruction has restored all three buildings and the front wall. The work continues.

For the first few weeks of the campaign the weather did not intrude upon the battlefield — not until the rains began in the last week of May. Then the surface of every road, field and track became a bottomless sea of mud in which all vehicles — wheeled and tracked — bogged down. Even worse was the plight of the infantrymen who had to live and fight desperate battles against a fanatical foe in some of the most terrible conditions imaginable.

Losier and I still send cards at Christmas. Filler, who also was wounded in the southern battlefield, died several years ago. His many wounds had troubled him throughout his life.

It was raining when the 2nd Battalion moved south to join the battle and my memory of the event is somewhat hazy. I remember struggling along muddy roads past hundreds of bodies of Japanese soldiers and Okinawan civilians killed as they retreated to the final siege line. I remember a large, wooden wheeled cannon abandoned by the enemy after it had become hopelessly mired in the mud. I also recall seeing a huge object hurtling through the air. It looked like a fifty-gallon gasoline drum with a fiery tail. The odd thing about it was that it was tumbling end over end. We watched until it fell to the earth about a half-mile from our column. It exploded and threw mud thirty feet into the air. It was not until after the war that I learned that this was an unsophisticated Japanese rocket. I had seen one careening through the wet skies once before while we were carrying supplies to Wana Draw. If they were trying to hit our column their accuracy was poor. If they were trying to impress us they did a good job. The explosion was similar to a 16-inch shell.

I remember passing through a large village which had been captured by the army and was called Iwa (now known as Kochinda). We dug in at dusk on the south side of a horseshoe-shaped hill west of Iwa. During the night one Japanese soldier tried to infiltrate our lines. When caught he hurtled several grenades and 'Moose', our flamethrower operator, shot him to death. In the early morning I walked over and looked at the body. His mouth and eyes were open and most of his teeth were gold. The flies were already busily at work on him. Moose was sitting nearby. He had been slightly wounded by grenade fragments and was checking out his flamethrower which had been hit in several non-vulnerable places. Moose was still shook up but relieved that he and his weapon had survived the hail of shrapnel.

The rain had stopped and as the sun rose I could see across the mile-wide valley. I stared incredulously at the forbidding ridges which ran from shore to shore. There was no doubt in my mind that we had located Ushijima's last siege line. A lot of men would die before that ridge was conquered. Suddenly shells began exploding in the valley about 1,000 yards away. In rapid order they began to march closer and closer. The realization hit me that the battalion was out in the open on the wrong side of the hill! The Japanese had spotted us and were zeroing in. Just as this thought crossed my mind a shell exploded twenty yards away, followed by three more in rapid succession. I dived into an empty foxhole. A shell burst near where I had been and someone yelled for a corpsman. I heard a lot of scrambling but stayed put while several more explosions erupted next to my foxhole showering me with mud. A dud hit the top of the hill with a thump and then hurtled along without exploding, making a whirring sound as it plowed through the sugar cane.

I decided it was time to get out of there. Summoning all of my courage I leaped to my feet and ran for the base of the hill. I prayed that no shell would explode until I had succeeded in getting over to the safe side. The Japanese were firing at us with 75mm cannons, not howitzers, so those of us who reached the reverse side of the hill were relatively protected. However, for some unexplained reason, a navy pilot in a Hellcat chose that moment to strafe us. He whistled in low with his .50-caliber machine guns chattering like popping grease. His intentions were good but fortunately his aim was bad. I don't think anyone was hit. The battalion reassembled and we moved into enemy territory, capturing a small village called Shindawaku. We shot up a few outpost positions lightly manned by rearguard and lost a few men. We then dug in on the correct (north) side of a hill which overlooked the sprawling valley in front of the Yaeju Dake, Yuza Dake, Kunishi ridges looming from east to west.

Above: **Marines of the 3rd Battalion, 1st Regiment, moving west on the Yuza-Zawa road. In the distance is Yuza Ridge. The photographer, Gudas, takes his picture from cover. (The 3rd was relieved by the 1st Battalion after this action.)** *Bottom:* **Yuza Ridge today. The hill on the right is the knob on the end of Yuza Dake.**

Today as I traveled to the Japanese memorial park at the southern end of the island I crossed that 'death valley' and climbed to the top of Yaeju Dake — the one called Big Apple by the men of the 96th Army Division. My eyes confirmed what I had suspected nearly four decades ago. The Japanese had converted this jagged 290-foot-high mass of coral into a cave-filled fortress. Although Ushijima had left behind 80,000 of his soldiers decaying in the mud and caves between Kakazu and the valley, this final battlefield was where he still had 30,000 men and an excellent island-wide defense line. Facing the US 7th Army Division on the east were the remnants of the 44th Brigade reinforced by many service troops. The US 96th Army Division faced Yaeju Dake and Yuza Dake. The 1st Marine Division was responsible for capturing Kunishi Ridge which ran across the western side of the island, terminating at the coast just south of the port city of Itoman.

Out in the valley, in front of the massive coral crags of his last siege line, Ushijima established several heavily fortified hill outposts, two of which were Yuza Hill and Hill 69. Yaeju Dake, Yuza Dake, Kunishi Ridge and the outposts were manned principally by Ushijima's strongest and best remaining troops — the 12,000 Manchurian veterans of the 24th Division. These brave, dedicated, ruthless infantrymen were to succeed in holding off the 96th Army Division and the 1st Marine Division for most of the month of June.

During the first week in June my regiment moved west from Iwa (Kochinda) capturing several lightly manned outpost hills. To be sure, nothing was easy and I lost friends during these battles but there was no comparison to what we were about to face when we attacked Yuza Hill, Hill 59 and, finally, the last major outpost: a thousand-yard-long, 50-foot-high pile of coral designated simply Hill 69.

On June 10 the 1st Battalion attempted to take Yuza Hill, the first strong point northwest of Yuza village. C Company lost every officer and seventy-five men. Losier and I had friends in C Company and so we and a dozen others volunteered to try to get the dead and wounded off the hill under cover of darkness. Somehow in the confusion we got separated and I found myself crawling through the mud with another Marine who was dragging a stretcher. It was a cold, black night and we were not sure where the casualties were located. Constant crawling had split open the cloth covering my knees and the rough coral was slashing my legs. Finally we heard a moan. A burst of machine gun fire from a Nambu rattled among the nearby boulders. I slithered toward the human sounds and found a Marine with a grazing head wound. He was semi-conscious. Someone had tied his heavy combat bandage around the deep crease in the side of his head above his right ear. Blood had caked the bandage and was covering my hand as I searched to determine how badly he was hurt. His skull was grooved and there were bone fragments but the bullet had not penetrated. He could be saved! When a grenade burst near I decided to get out of there. We rolled him onto the stretcher and, hunched over, we began to try and find our way back to our lines. A flare burst and I saw that we were near the north-west side of Yuza Hill, about 500 yards from my foxhole on Hill 59. We made a run for it.

A stretcher team usually comprises four men. Despite the fact that there were only two of us we seemed possessed of superhuman strength, I guess because we were scared. Our casualty must have weighed 200 pounds. In the darkness I could not tell how big the other Marine was but I knew that I only weighed 140 pounds even when soaking wet. At any rate we lifted the stretcher and stumbled back to the 2nd Battalion lines where we turned the casualty over to a corpsman. We then parted company and I never did find out who my companion was.

Despite the darkness I located Losier kneeling next to three stretchers. The camouflaged ponchos covering the faces of the Marines indicated they were dead. Losier couldn't speak. He was choked up. I lifted one poncho and looked at the lifeless face of a friend from boot camp days. I don't know what company he was in but since maggots were already at work in his mouth and eyes I knew he had been dead for at least a day. He probably was from G Company of my battalion which had taken casualties capturing Hill 59. I covered him up tenderly and took Losier's arm. We returned to our foxhole.

My friend, Wayne Lyons, was sitting nearby holding his left hand which had a bloody bandage on it. I went over and knelt beside him. He was crying. I put my hand on his shoulder and he looked up. It seems that yesterday he and several of his friends had been blowing caves on the reverse side of Hill 59. They had been hit hard by machine gun fire from Hill 69 and Yuza Hill. Lyons had dropped to the ground after taking a grazing wound to his hand. Two of his companions had fallen across him bleeding from numerous bullet wounds. Lyons had been lying out there all day with the dead men still covering him. The machine guns kept shooting into the lifeless bodies which protected Lyons. When night came he had crawled back up the hill and a stretcher party had gone out and brought the bodies back. Lozier and I talked to Lyons for a while until he regained his composure. The last I saw of him he was walking over toward the G Company area. I remember the globs of dried blood which caked his dungarees. Several days later, while his company was cut off on Kunishi Ridge, Lyons was lost. The official records show him as missing in action. He was either blown to pieces or captured and killed. His body was never found.

After talking to Lyons, Losier and I settled down into our two-man foxhole. The word was passed up to us that a counter-attack was coming. I put my bayonet on my rifle, placed two grenades nearby and waited. I was angry. I was sad. Had the Japanese tried to overrun us that night I would have killed ruthlessly, vengefully.

Today a used car lot sits at the western base of Yuza Hill. I tried to climb the hill but again the thick jungle prevented me from doing so. I did locate several sealed caves and a large memorial to the Japanese who had died there. I remembered C Company and G Company and my friends. There were no memorials to them. I couldn't help but wonder who had won the war. I guess that since Okinawa is a part of Japan they have every right to determine what monuments or memorials they will allow on their property. I am reminded, however, that the Japanese are our allies today and I can think of no better way to help heal the thirty-eight year old wounds of both countries than to show respect for the courage and sacrifice of both armies. I recall seeing a picture of a monument to one of the Japanese pilots who was killed while attacking Pearl Harbor. *(See After the Battle No. 38.)* The monument is located on the island of Oahu where he died. Americans regard the attack on Pearl Harbor as the most reprehensible assault ever perpetrated upon them. Yet, they show respect for the courage of one of those pilots. Perhaps, the Japanese Government will come to the same realization some day.

June 11, 1945 was designated as the day all units of the US Tenth Army were to commence the major attack upon Ushijima's last siege line. The 7th Army Division was to continue its assault upon Hill 95, the eastern anchor of the line. The 96th Division was to cross the valley and begin the rugged climb up the sheer faces of Yaeju Dake and Yuza Dake. The 1st Regiment of the 1st Marine Division was to clear the last remaining outpost in front of Kunishi Ridge and then the 7th Regiment was to assault the ridge itself. The 5th Marines were in reserve. Despite great expectations and effort, the only major successes achieved on June 11 were at the eastern and western ends of the ridge line. The 7th Division seized Hill 95 and the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines captured the last major outpost before Kunishi Ridge, Hill 69. I was there.

F Company led the attack against the 1,000-yard-long hill which jutted out into the valley pointing at Kunishi Ridge like a spear. My platoon was originally in reserve. However, the 1st and 3rd Platoons, in assault, were shot up as they crossed the valley south-

This was the battle of Okinawa: the quick. Evacuation of the wounded from Kunishi Ridge was only possible by using armour. Photo of Private W. D. Fuhlrodt by Sergeant Thomas Barnett.

This was the battle of Okinawa: the dead. Poncho-covered bodies with a Marine's blanket on that nearest to the camera.

Now a second-hand car dealer's yard; then a field of war. The incongruous comparisons of history, remembered now only by a memorial to the Japanese that died here. This is where Charles Leonard was machine-gunned, and where the jeep drove up to pick up wounded.

west of Yuza Hill and quickly found themselves exposed to fire from the east side of Hill 69, the west side of Yuza Hill, and long-range fire from Yuza Dake in the Army zone. At this point the 2nd Platoon was ordered to attack from the north and to enfilade the hill. With Lieutenant Martel in the lead, Losier and I and the rest of the platoon 'went over the top'.

Prior to this action I had been shot at on numerous occasions. I had been shelled and mortared often and I had seen my friends killed and wounded. However on this day I was to experience the ugliness of close-in fighting. Today, I was to face my enemy and see his eyes.

Lieutenant Martel led us down the side of Hill 59. Overhead the machine guns of G Company were covering our advance. The pop-pop-pop sound of the .30-caliber air cooled guns was reassuring. I knew that my friend Hook was behind one of those guns and I hoped he would shoot straight this day.

We hurried along the side of the hill and then dropped down five feet to a road. Losier had the bazooka and I was struggling with the heavy rocket bag. I was carrying too much weight for my small frame and when I hit the road my left ankle collapsed inward and I suffered a severe sprain. I fell to one knee and the coral ripped more skin off my already battered knees. I had earlier used a safety pin to try to close the hole in the right knee of my dungaree trousers. The fall opened the pin and drove the needle deep into my knee. All around me the riflemen of the 2nd Platoon were hurrying down the road. I struggled to my feet and pulled the safety pin out and threw it away. I could feel my ankle swelling against the tight leggings and both knees were bleeding. I limped along trying to keep up.

I had lost track of Losier and Lieutenant Martel but was beginning to catch the last squad when a Nambu opened up on us. One never forgets the sound of this infamous Japanese light machine gun. It was probably one of the best infantry weapons of World War II. It had a very high rate of fire. It did not pop-pop like our machine guns — it whirred like a rattlesnake. Two men to my right went down heavily. A corpsman hurried over to attend to them. My mouth was suddenly dry and I experienced real, consuming terror. The men in front of me were leaving the road and running south across the lower slope of Yuza Hill. I followed with all the speed my battered legs and overweighted body could generate. The bag of rockets shifted and got entangled with my legs. I fell heavily, and my slung rifle spun off my shoulder smashing me in the mouth. My lips began to bleed.

I lay for a dazed moment and then rose to my knees to try and get my bearings. Our machine guns were chattering angrily and the bullets were buzzing over my head. I was in the open, sprawled in front of a small pine tree. About a hundred yards away were several Marines at the western base of Yuza Hill. Losier and the lieutenant were with them. When I started to rise the Nambu opened up again and began searching for me. At least that's what I thought at the time. I knew I was in trouble. The rest of the platoon had found cover. As I started to crawl forward bullets threw up dirt and coral ten feet away. I flattened out. The machine gun searched. First to my right then to my left. I was very frightened. I knew that eventually it would find me. There was a ten second lull and I began to breathe again. Then a long burst just barely cleared the top of my helmet and sawed down the small tree, part of which fell on my legs. I knew that he had shot a full magazine and was reloading. Despite my terror I leaped to my feet and hurtled my aching body and all its encumbrances down the side of the hill. Rolling the last ten feet I ended up in a heap next to Losier, the lieutenant and about a dozen men of the 2nd Platoon. They were lying in a ditch next to a road. Nobody paid much attention to me so I continued to sprawl on my back, trying to get some air into my heaving lungs.

I noticed that the hot sun had dried the mud and that a jeep speeding toward us down the road from Hill 59 was leaving a trail of coral dust. Just as he reached our position the Nambu firing from Hill 69 to our front found him. Sparks flew. He shut off the engine and leaped into the ditch alongside us. His eyes were bugging out. Lieutenant Martel asked him what the hell he was doing out here in no man's land. He said he was supposed to pick up some wounded from the two assault platoons scattered in the cane field to our front.

As I lay half listening to this conversation I became conscious of a terrible thirst. Fortunately, ever since Peleliu, the Marine Corps had issued two canteens to each Marine. Combat causes a fierce thirst. I emptied one canteen and then, knowing that it was only about twelve noon and that we had lots of fighting ahead, I asked the jeep driver if he had any water. He replied that if I had the guts to go up to where the jeep sat I could fill up from a five gallon can. I collected ten canteens from those around us and, with great apprehension, crawled up and under the jeep. When I had assembled the courage to raise up I located the heavy can, opened it and dumped water into the canteens. I spilled twice as much as I poured into the aluminum containers.

While finishing this task I heard a whirring roar and a Sherman lumbered down the road toward us. Kneeling on top of the tank holding onto the turret was an old buddy named Kelly. He was yelling for grenades. It seems that there were a lot of Japanese spider holes out in the canefields and that while the tanks were trying to work their way to the base of Hill 69 in the distance, the suicidal Nip soldiers were attacking them with demolition charges. Kelly was riding shotgun and had already killed several from his perch on the tank. They had succeeded in wounding him slightly with a grenade but he was most angry because they had broken his glasses. He kept yelling that he wanted more grenades so he could 'kill the bastards'. Kelly was one of the few World War II Marines I knew who wore glasses. He was a gutsy guy. The last I saw him he was riding off into the dusty canefields like a horse soldier in a John Wayne movie. I think he got a Silver Star. If so, he earned it!

Today I tried to climb Yuza Hill, densely covered with jungle growth. I walked through the used car lot located at its south-western base and examined the Japanese Memorial

Shrine at the foot of the hill. Near the memorial were several sealed caves. I wondered if the defenders' bones were inside and if they were the ones who had shot my friends to death. I struggled through the insect-filled shrubbery for about thirty feet before turning back. I was tired of being bitten by spiders, mosquitoes and ants. In my mind lurked the fact that my friends constantly warned me about the deadly Habu snake. The Habu closely resembles a rattlesnake but since it has no rattles it gives no warning. They live everywhere on the island and are often found in trees. I had been told that a young girl had been playing in a tree several months back and a Habu bit her in the head. She died. I gave up my effort to climb Yuza Hill.

After picking up two happily wounded Marines ('Hollywood' leg wounds), the jeep driver took off in a cloud of dust and headed for the relative safety of Hill 59, from which we could still hear the occasional cough of Hook's machine gun.

A runner arrived from our company commander. He talked to Lieutenant Martel for a few minutes then disappeared. The lieutenant took out his wallet and looked at the picture of a woman. He then told us to saddle up. We were to do what two platoons before us had failed to do. We were to take Hill 69.

'Bazooka', he said to me, 'I don't know how many of us will be alive tonight'.

I followed him closely as he headed northwest toward an embankment. We assembled together at the bottom and then he said: 'Let's go!'

What follows was the closest to a World War I charge I ever engaged in. We went over the top of the embankment and, in single file at a bent-over trot, advanced toward the northern base of Hill 69. We were dangerously exposed but fortunately the Japanese were preoccupied with firing at our comrades out in the canefields facing the hill. We were enfilading it. We were moving along the steep eastern base of the hill, underneath the heavily manned caves. Unknown to us at the time, the Nips also had a trench system on top of the hill but we were so close to the base that they couldn't see us from the top.

We had advanced along the base of the hill about fifty yards when the lieutenant turned and ordered someone to tell the machine gun section to join the main body. They were behind the embankment to our rear. No one volunteered. So, more from embarrassment than courage, I lay the bazooka down, took off my back pack and ran as fast as I could toward the safety of the embankment. I

Above: **Marines from E Company, 2nd Battalion (Charles's unit), 1st Marine Regiment, on patrol on the south end of Hill 69 near Nanzan Castle.** *Below:* **This second shot by USMC photographer Bushemi shows the patrol pinned down by sniper fire in the shadow of a stone torii. (The gate is visible in the shot above.)**

Charles Leonard comments that 'I searched in vain for the torii but presume it was removed. This area is now heavily wooded and a very sacred place'.

passed a knocked out Japanese truck and dropped to my knees at the top of the embankment.

'Bring up the machine guns!', I shouted in a loud whisper. I was out in the open but I did not want to go down to the safety of the embankment because I knew it would take a lot of courage to leave it a second time.

When I heard the reply 'O.K.' I turned and headed back. I had just reached the truck when bullets began slapping around me. As I dived under the truck something hit my foot. I lay for a moment conscious of a strong odor of burning rubber. I looked at my left combat boot and saw that the Japanese bullet had gouged a hole through the black rubberized heel. Smoke was still curling around the groove. I leaped up and hobbled back to the platoon.

When I told Lieutenant Martel that the machine guns were coming, he nodded and we started forward again. Because I had delivered the message to him I now found myself second in line and moving closer to real trouble. At that moment Lieutenant Martel and I were probably further south than any other American troops on Okinawa but fortunately we didn't realize it at the time. Suddenly something landed at my feet, between Losier and me. Smoke curled up and it hissed. 'Grenade!', I yelled and dropped flat. Losier and those near him also fell just a second before the grenade blew up, showering all of us with dirt and coral. No one was hurt but this first grenade was followed by at least a dozen more. Every time one fell amongst us we dropped flat. I grabbed one of my grenades pulled the pin and hurled it on top of Hill 69. I mistakenly thought they were rolling them down on us. But, then I saw the caves . . . they were all around . . . the steep side of the hill was riddled with them.

One large cave attracted our immediate attention. It was about three feet above us and dug in to the vertical cliff. It had an entrance five feet wide and four feet high reinforced with sections of railroad track and wooden logs. I realized then that the embankment we had climbed to get alongside Hill 69 was, in fact, a railroad and the track itself had been taken up by the soldiers of Ushijima's 9th Division to reinforce their caves.

I kneeled down and assembled the bazooka. Lieutenant Martel tossed a grenade into the cave. The answer was a return shower of bullets and grenades. Two men went down next to me. One had his throat ripped and torn. The other was shot through the chest. Sullivan, our corpsman, immediately took action to keep the chest wound alive. I pushed the other Marine behind a large coral rock and covered his multiple wounds with his combat bandage. His injuries weren't serious, just bloody. Throughout my ministrations he held tightly to his BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle). When he realized that he was not going to die but was too badly hurt to fight anymore, he handed me his weapon and told me to give it to his friend. As he stumbled off toward the railroad embankment heavy firing broke out up ahead. Lieutenant Martel was shooting his sub-machine gun into the large cave while our demolitions man crawled up toward it with a large charge of plastic dynamite. Another grenade came flying down and Lieutenant Martel kicked it away. A moment later the dynamite was thrown in and a shower of rocks, body parts, pieces of weapons and dirt rained on us.

But, it wasn't enough. Within two minutes we were again under fire from that cave and others above and below. Mortar shells also began falling on us. After shouting into the walkie-talkie radio, Lieutenant Martel gave the order to leave the hill, cross the north-south road which paralleled the base of Hill 69, and take cover in the canefields. He had called for a mortar barrage and tank support. We obeyed, somewhat reluctantly, because that canefield was exposed.

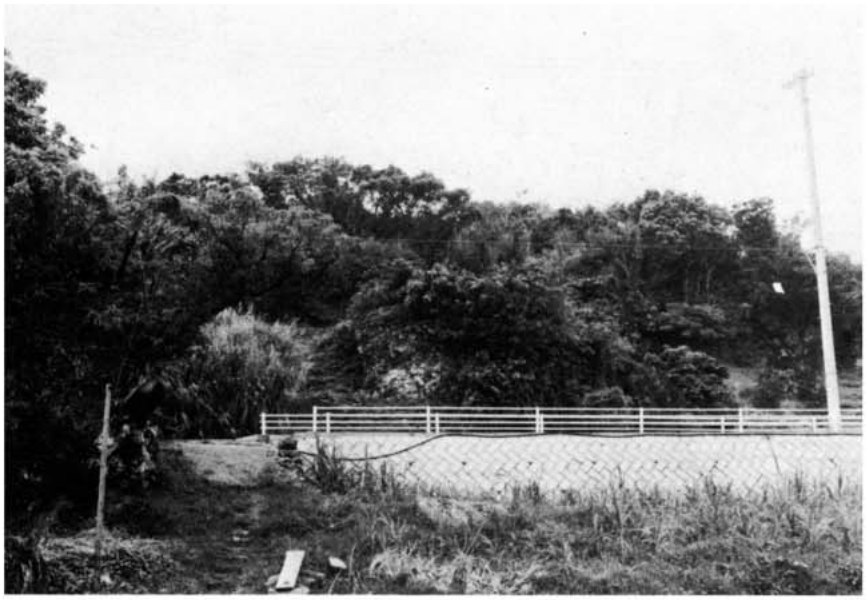
There were two types of defensive position on Okinawa which were utilised to the full by the Japanese: man-made tombs and natural caves. Every hillside was honeycombed with them and every one had to be assaulted and neutralised . . . and there were hundreds, if not thousands, to be dealt with. Where flame could not be brought to bear, explosives and grenades were the only answer. Prisoners were not usually taken. These troops are from the 3rd Battalion, HQ Company, 106th Infantry Regiment of the 27th Division.

Today as I traveled along the east side of Hill 69 from north to south I noted that very little has changed. The railroad embankment has gone but the caves still wink at me. They are everywhere. The two major openings which we encountered in the northerly part of the hill have been sealed. One has been permanently closed with cinder blocks and has a stone memorial in front of it. The other, the one I helped blow up, has been closed with concrete and chunks of coral. Someone had broken a very small hole in its front. I could not see in but there was enough room to insert my camera with flash attachment. I had to wait until my return to the States to see what I had captured. The pictures were not too clear but they showed a large cavern with tunnels running deep into the bowels of the hill. The steel railroad tracks are gone so it is probably dangerous to go in. I had no interest in doing so in 1945. Nor did I today. There are a lot of ghosts in that cave.

Losier and I had just crawled into the ditch when three Shermans came waddling up the road. They were in clear view of the heavy fortifications on Kunishi Ridge, 800 yards to the south.

The first tank was opposite us and pivoting his 75 to blast the hillside when several 47mm anti-tank shells came swooshing in. The first round hit the turret. I don't think it exploded but there was a loud clang and a shower of sparks. The second round missed the tank but struck the ditch full of Marines. One of the machine gunners stood up for an instant; just long enough for me to see that a piece of a metal ammunition box had been blown into his chest. Then he collapsed.

This is the cave from which the first grenade was thrown at Charles's squad.



This is the open canefield where Charles and Dick Losier took cover while the Shermans came up the road. When the tanks pulled back they returned to Hill 69 in the background and began blowing caves.

Shells were exploding all around now. Our tanks were a vital part of our assault team on Okinawa and were used extensively by both the Army and Marine Corps. But, they did attract artillery! By now all three tanks had been hit but not knocked out. They were tracking backwards, retracing their path to the safety of the northern hills. We never saw them again. I understand that they were all severely damaged. If Hill 69 was to be captured it would be by the flesh and blood of the infantry!

When the shelling had commenced, Losier and I gathered our weapons and gear and scurried about thirty feet deeper into the canefield where we found a three-foot rock wall. We crouched there and waited out the barrage. Suddenly off to the south, five Okinawan civilians appeared. A young man was carrying another man who had one foot blown off. Ahead of them were two elderly women and an old man. When they saw us they started to panic, shouting hysterically to each other and pointing at us. Now that I think about it I can understand why. Both of us were covered with mud and dust. Our dungaree cloth uniforms were in shreds and we had not shaved for three weeks. We were also armed to the teeth.

Bullets were slapping into the cane around the little family and I feared for their safety. They had stopped in their tracks when they saw us. I tried to look as friendly as a person can who is expecting to die at any moment. I waved towards them and motioned them to get behind us. They talked among themselves briefly and then ran past us, bowing profusely. In a way I envied them. They were now headed away from the hell in front of us. Losier looked at me and I realized he felt the same. We both knew where we would be going shortly. My throat was dry.

The lieutenant stood up and waved us forward. As we approached the base of the hill we again came under heavy machine gun and rifle fire and were hit with a shower of grenades. Men went down on all sides. Somehow I got separated from Losier and found myself alone with the bazooka. I shot two rockets into a cave. I don't know if they were effective but no more fire came from them. I had no rockets left so I joined up with a demolitions man and three riflemen and we started blowing caves. For the next few hours we moved from cave to cave. The procedure was always the same. The riflemen would spread out around the cave and fire into the small opening. Then the demolitions man would place a cap and a length of fuse into a chunk of plastic dynamite, light the fuse and toss it into the hole. Blam! generally that was the end. Chunks of coral would fly in all directions, often closing the entrance. We counted on the explosive concussion to kill the occupants. I am sure that in most cases it did the job. In several instances large sections of bodies were blasted out at us mixed in with the rubble.

We had just blown a cave and were resting in the shelter of a huge block of coral when Losier and the lieutenant came down a path which led to the top of the hill. They were supporting each other. The lieutenant had been shot through the hand and arm and Losier had been knocked unconscious by a grenade or a mortar and had shrapnel in his left ear. Lieutenant Martel was in shock and bleeding heavily. Losier was on his feet but very unsteady. I asked him if he needed help. He said, 'No', and headed toward the rear, his arm around the lieutenant's waist. Lieutenant Martel looked at me and wished me luck.

I started up the trail alone, when, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a movement. I turned my head just as a potato-masher grenade struck me on my helmet. The force of the blow knocked me to my knees. The grenade bounced on down the hill into a pile of coral and exploded harmlessly. I think the blow to the head would have split my skull if I had not been wearing a helmet.

I put my bayonet on my rifle and crawled over to the source of the grenade. I found a well-hidden opening, about three feet high and two feet wide. I had only one grenade left and it was white phosphorous. I threw it in and stood back. A huge cloud of smoke and burning phosphorous roared out of the shallow cave. A piece landed on my arm and quickly burned through the cotton cloth and started burrowing into the skin. I pulled my bayonet from my rifle and started to scrape the phosphorous off. The smell of burning flesh was nauseating.

I was so occupied with this problem I did not notice that a Japanese soldier was squeezing through the cave opening. He saw me and charged with his bayonet-tipped rifle aimed at my stomach. I dropped my bayonet and grabbed my rifle. I squeezed off four rounds before he hit me. By then he was dead but his bayonet slapped into the webbing of my backpack strap which was over my right shoulder. It glanced off the heavy webbing and slashed across my chest. Since my bullets had slowed his lunge there was no significant weight behind the bayonet and it did not enter my body — just cut me superficially. He had been knocked off balance and slumped beside me. I shot him four more times and continued jerking on the trigger even after the clip had been ejected past my ear.

I sat down heavily and examined myself. It was then I recalled that I had looked directly into his dark eyes as my bullets hit him. I carry that vision still, like a photograph, in my brain. I have no regrets. We were two soldiers whose job was to kill. I had done my job. He

Demolitions man, Corporal Paul E. Robinson, demonstrates blowing a cave on Hill 69 using a satchel charge — the fuse is lit with a cigarette before the plastic explosive is flung in the entrance. Charles Leonard comments that 'Corporal Robinson seems pretty casual — probably because this picture was taken on June 12 — the day after the hill was captured. He would not have been so carefree on June 11 when the whole

The Japanese soldier charged out of a cave on this part of the hill in the heavy underbrush on the upper left. A concrete memorial stands in front of a machine gun position on the left. The large rock in the centre is where Charles hid on June 12 while under shell-fire.

had failed to do his. At least on me. Perhaps, he had killed some of my friends. If so, they were now avenged.

Today there are so many caves and so much heavy foliage on Hill 69 that I could not find the precise one he came out of. Events were happening too fast and I had blown too many caves to be able to pinpoint that special one. I searched and found at least four that looked like it.

Many of the caves on Hill 69 are now sealed with concrete, others are not. There are a lot of memorials. They are all in Japanese and I could not read what they said. Perhaps, one pays tribute to the soldier I killed. He was brave and his eyes showed no fear. He would have killed me, but for the stopping power of the armor-piercing .30-caliber bullets in my semi-automatic Garand. I don't know why he didn't shoot me. Maybe he was out of ammunition. But I got him before he got me. I wonder what he saw in my eyes?

area was one huge firefight. As a matter of fact we probably blew in this cave and Robinson is probably making certain that no Japanese are alive. Note the railroad track used to reinforce the entrance. However, even on June 12 there would still be some Japs deep in some caves and sniper fire and artillery would still be hitting the hillside.'

On my return trip in April I especially intended to find Hill 69. It was not too difficult. Although the battlefields around Shuri and Naha are covered with houses, office buildings and highways, the southern area remains much as it was except for ground cover. The humid climate has smothered the hills and ridges with heavy jungle growth, but Hill 69 still stands pointing toward Kunishi Ridge. On my first visit to the hill it was raining when I arrived at the southern end near the town of Ozato. Upon climbing the hill I found myself among several Okinawan families who were worshipping at a small shrine. One of them, Mr. Mimoru Kinjo, took my picture as I posed with his son. He told me that this part of the hill was the site of the old Nanzan Castle built in the 12th Century by the Lord of Ozato. Okinawa had, at that time been divided into three kingdoms: one in the north, the middle island and the south. Nanzan Castle ruled the south. North of the castle site, where the hilltop is the widest, there is now an elementary school. The gymnasium of the school stands approximately where I spent the night of June 11, 1945.

I shall never forget that night! It was about 7.00 p.m. and beginning to get dark as I pulled my aching bloody body up the narrow trail to the top of the hill, dragging the bazooka and my rifle. I located the remnants of the 2nd Platoon. I counted only twelve of us. Most were lying in a shallow trench the Japanese had dug. They manned three machine guns which pointed down the gently

The caves on Okinawa have since been sealed up — permanent tombs to the thousands of Japanese who died and remain in them. Each has a memorial inscription, the one on the left reading simply: 'Japanese soldiers' grave'. Charles laconically comments: 'Hill 69 was defended by crack troops of the 24th Division — I probably blew in this cave'.

rolling western side of Hill 69. The corporal who now commanded the 2nd Platoon was in a shell-hole with Sullivan and a demolitions man. There was no room for me so I tried to dig a hole. I made so much noise with my shovel that the corporal finally told me to stop. There was very little dirt on top of the hill and everytime I tried to dig I struck pieces of coral. In order to provide some protection I gathered chunks of coral and built a foot high circular wall and climbed into the middle. Not much protection but better than nothing. I put my bayonet on my rifle and tried to get some rest. The corporal came over and asked me how I was. I said I was as good as could be expected under the circumstances. My ankle throbbed, my arm burned, my chest was still bleeding and I had a lot of tiny grenade fragments in my arms and legs. None of my many injuries was enough to get a ticket to the hospital though. I didn't even ask. I knew I was not disabled, just kind of shot up. It never occurred to me to go to the rear. I had seen the conditions other Marines were in when they were evacuated and my wounds were not serious enough to warrant being sent back. Now that I look back on it thirty-eight years later I am not so sure. I could hardly walk and I was in a lot of pain. But, I was young and believed that a good Marine stuck it out until they had to carry him away. My turn would come. Even sooner than I imagined.

Most people do not understand the attrition of men in an infantry platoon. A Marine division may contain as many as 20,000 men, including 81 infantry platoons. Each platoon starts out with about 70 riflemen, including attached demolitions men, bazookamen, mortar men and a corpsman. This amounts to less than 6,000 men in a division who are in a position to regularly come to hand-to-hand combat with the enemy. On Okinawa the casualties in the infantry platoons, both Army and Marine, exceeded 100 per cent. It was dangerous to be anywhere on the island during those eighty-two days but the rear area troops were eating hot food and watching outdoor movies while the men in the lines lay in the mud, attacked the enemy and died. There were few Marines or soldiers still standing on June 22 who had come ashore as infantrymen on April 1, 1945. The 2nd Battalion of the 1st Marine Regiment had landed with 32 officers and 869 men. They lost 32 officers and 872 men! That adds up to 904 dead and wounded — more than 100 per cent casualties, not counting the hundreds sick and victims of combat fatigue. Most of these men were pulled off the lines for a few days until they were feeling better and then sent back into action.

Somehow I fell asleep in my cramped quarters. I had eaten nothing all day and had no appetite. I only needed rest. Sometime during the night I was awakened by gunfire. Flares drifted low over the top of the hill and I watched them swinging to and fro suspended from tiny parachutes. They made a weird, whirring sound as they floated down.

I missed the companionship of Losier. I felt alone. I gripped my rifle, checking to be sure the bayonet was fully seated and would not come loose if I had to use it in a hurry. My ankle throbbed and the blood had dried hard inside my filthy green tee shirt. A large scab had formed on my chest and it kept sticking to my clothes and then breaking loose, bleeding, and sticking again.

I tried to peer up the slope of the southern end of the hill where the remnants of the 1st and 3rd Platoons had joined us and were dug in. I saw only trees. All was quiet and motionless in the machine gun trench to the west of my upright foxhole. If a counter-attack came it would be up this gentle western slope. I strained my eyes and worried about the shadows dancing in the light of the flares. I felt close to death. I took deep breaths and decided that if they came I would fight back as hard as I could. I placed extra clips of ammunition around me and touched each of my grenades. I fell asleep. It had been an exhausting day.

The M2A1-7 portable flamethrower was another formidable weapon for flushing out caves. The Marine in the picture is using thickened fuel which gave a range of 40-50 metres in a narrow rod which stuck to the target and burned with intense heat. (Ordinary petrol produced a billowing flame up to 25 metres.) Each filling allowed for four or five short bursts or up to nine seconds of continuous fire.

Today I know that the area where the other two platoons of F Company were dug in contains the ruins of Nanzan Castle. In 1945 it was just a jumble of trees in a shadowy spot which contained a bunch of weary Marines.

I was awakened when the corporal called to me: 'Bazooka, go down to E Company and find out what the firing is all about'. I wished he would go himself. I could hardly walk. But he was in charge of the dozen of us remnants of the 2nd Platoon so I struggled to my feet, took my bayonet off my rifle and used the rifle as a crutch while stumbling down the slight incline which led to E Company. I had taken only three hop, skipsteps when a chatter arose from the caves below us.

'Bazooka, you're going to die! Hey, Bazooka, we're going to kill you!'

There were several voices shouting in English and others in Japanese. Obviously, we hadn't blown all of the caves and some of the occupants were letting us know that they were still around. As happened so many times on Okinawa we were on the hill but the Nips were in it. Their English was pretty good, unfortunately. It made me nervous. They were mimicking the corporal, but they were yelling at me. I knew they couldn't see me because I was several yards back from the steep edge of the eastern cliff and it was still dark. Nevertheless their taunts were effective. They got my full attention.

I heard an American grenade pop its spoon and then in four seconds explode down the eastern side of the hill. I guess some angry Marine was trying to shut up the Japanese rooting section. It worked.

Hobbling along painfully, I made as much noise as possible. I wanted E Company to know I was coming. Japanese infiltrators would be stealthy quiet. The password was 'Lollapalooza' and I kept whispering it just loudly enough to be heard several yards ahead.

A voice shouted, 'Who's there?' This was followed by several shots which whizzed

One of the main assets of flame was considered to be its psychological effect in forcing defenders to leave well-prepared positions or encourage them to surrender. To the Japanese, however, surrender on the battlefield was deemed worse than death. These are just two of the 7,400 prisoners taken.

The new school on top of Hill 69. It was here that Charles Leonard spent the night of June 11 — he dug in just about where the school gymnasium *(below)* stands today.

overhead. I fell hard to the rocky coral ground and ripped open my knees again. I was scared and angry. If the Japanese killed me that would be bad enough, but my comrades in E Company were not the enemy.

'Hey, I'm from Fox Company'. My shouts were just frantic enough to be convincing.

'Come on in Mac, but move slowly.' The voice came from a shadowy area about thirty feet ahead.

I pulled myself up and limped towards a group of Marines who had their weapons pointed at me. 'I'm from the 2nd Platoon of Fox Company. Our lieutenant and most the NCOs are gone. The corporal in charge wants me to find out what the firing is all about.'

A young Marine with an officer's pouch hanging from his shoulder gave me the once over. 'You look pretty beat up. Are you O.K.?'

'Yeah', I answered tiredly, 'I'm O.K.'.

'We had a bunch of Japs and civilians try to break through both from the west and from caves on the other side that were bypassed. We killed most of them and everything seems O.K. now.' He pointed toward a scattering of bodies just outside the perimeter. 'Any infiltrators up your way?'

I shook my head and turned back. Nothing more needed to be said. In the darkness we were all just shadowy blotches. I never saw their faces. I never saw them again.

The corporal was relieved to hear my report. He settled back in his foxhole and told me to crawl out to the edge of the steep cliff and watch for infiltrators who might come up the steep trail from bypassed caves. 'Try not to make too much noise', were the last words he had for me.

I pulled my bayonet from its scabbard and moved over to the cliff edge. The coral was exposed and dug into my sore chest when I lay down. I shifted to a sitting position and looked out over the valley while I fixed the bayonet to my rifle.

Today the gymnasium of the elementary school sits about where the trail reached the top of the hill. The underbrush is impenetrable at this spot. The trail area is densely covered and I could find no evidence of it. I circled the north end of Hill 69 and approached the gym from the west where the hill sloped gently toward Itoman City. The Japanese who charged E Company came up this slope. They died for their country. I remembered the motionless mounds that had sprinkled this area that night long ago.

As I stood reflecting on 'yesterday' I was spotted by a dozen Japanese children who were looking out the windows of the gymnasium. They yelled and waved at me. As I waved back I marvelled at how the passage of time can make things seem so different. Those children had no idea of the horrors that had occured on their playground. Hill 69 was the location of a place of learning for them. I had learned there too. What I learned still keeps me awake at night.

It had become very quiet. The flares had stopped popping overhead and I was being lulled into a half-sleep when I heard it. My ears told me that something was crawling up the trail. I strained to see. It was too dark.

'Who's there?' I half whispered. The scraping stopped for a moment and then started again, getting closer.

'If you are a Marine give me the f*****g password!' No answer but the sounds continued. What was I to do? The corporal had told me not to make a lot of noise. If I opened fire or threw a grenade he might get upset with me. But he would be even more distressed if an enemy soldier slipped by and cut his throat. I was only eighteen years old and conditioned to obey. I am sure that today I would have both fired a full eight-round clip down the trail and tossed a grenade. Thirty-eight years ago I puzzled the right thing to do.

I pulled out a hunting knife my brother Jack had given me when I went overseas and I threw it as hard as I could toward the sound. I heard a grunt and a lot of movement . . . then all was still. In the morning the trail was empty and there was no sign of my knife. There was no blood either. I never was a knife thrower. Knives always worried me. I dreaded coming to terms with my enemy armed only with a blade. I was mentally prepared and well trained to do so but hoped not to have to. I have often wondered what or who was coming up that trail.

When the sun rose on the morning of June 12 there was a lot of firing off to the south, around Kunishi Ridge. I was unaware at that time that the 7th Regiment had launched a night attack across the open valley and was now struggling to maintain its toe-hold on a part of Kunishi Ridge. The machine gunners were stirring in their narrow slit trench. I had several cans of weanies and beans in my pack but no appetite. I took a drink from my canteen, grabbed my rifle and crawled over toward the hole containing the corporal. I didn't make it. Without warning three flat trajectory shells slammed into the top of Hill 69. They were followed quickly by a half-dozen more. The gunners on Kunishi Ridge had us zeroed in. The shells were marching right down the top of the hill from south to north. Trees, rocks, bushes and bodies were being hurtled in all directions. I rolled down the path about half way and then crawled under a huge boulder. Almost as if they were chasing me, three shells screamed right over my rock and hit the road twenty yards away. Sullivan had followed me and we both huddled against the rock. Three more explosions erupted on the hill above us. Someone yelled, 'Corpsman!' Sullivan swore but, in the tradition of all the sailor-corpsmen who served with the Marines, he swallowed his fear and climbed back up the hill to tend to the wounded. That was his job and he was good at it. Combat Marines of World War II are in agreement that the corpsmen who treated them often endangered their own lives beyond the call of duty. Sullivan, crawling fearfully back up to the top of Hill 69, was yet another example of their dedication.

Fearing a counter-attack I hurried after Sullivan. I presumed that the shelling had hit our small machine gun section and if we were attacked I had better be available to man one of the guns. I feared the shelling but I feared being overrun even more.

When I got to the top I found a shambles. A shell had landed in my foxhole and wiped out my backpack and the bazooka. Several of the machine gunners had been wounded. I crawled into the trench and climbed behind a

gun, pulling the bolt back twice to be sure it was armed and ready to fire. I lay there several minutes until the corporal came over and told me that the shell which had struck my foxhole had blown out the telephone which was tied into F Company headquarters, 500 yards across the canefield east of us. He told me to go back to headquarters and tell them we had lost communication with them.

I climbed out of the shallow trench, grabbed my rifle and headed for the side of the hill bent over so as to make less of a target. When I reached the trail I saw several stretcher-bearer parties place three poncho-covered bodies by the side of the road below me. The poncho had pulled down slightly off of one body and a gentle breeze was stirring the thatch of fine blond hair which stuck out. The dead Leatherneck's face was hidden but his hair seemed alive. It waved too and fro as if protesting the suddeness and permanence of death. I started down the path.

I had only taken two steps when the anti-tank gun fired again. I knew that he had seen my movement and that I should get under cover but it was too late. I heard the metallic swoosh as the shell sought me out. Before I could move to protect myself there was a huge red flash next to me and I was blasted into unconsciousness.

Above: **When Charles Leonard visited the Pentagon photographic archives, by incredible chance he came across this series of pictures taken by Marine Corps photographer Bushemi who was with the 1st Division on Hill 69 on June 12. This was the same day that Charles was wounded there. When he revisited Okinawa he proved the picture had been taken in about the middle of the hill — the ridge in the background running north-south being Yuza Ridge. This sequence could almost be recording what happened to him after the shell-burst caught him.** *Below:* **Today Yuza Ridge is more heavily overgrown.**

The Navy corpsman having temporarily patched up the Marine, the stretcher-bearers carry him away down the hill to the south. Yuza Hill through the smoke on the right. Charles points out that the railway embankment behind which his platoon approached the north end of Hill 69 can be seen in front of the knee of the leading Marine.

Today I could not reach the trail area because it was so heavily overgrown. I did approach the bottom of the hill and stand near where the three Marine bodies had been placed next to a large rock. The rock is still there although it, too, is covered with brush, grass and vines. It was a miracle that my body had not been added to the three other Leathernecks. I was badly wounded and spent six months in military hospitals but I had survived.

After leaving Hill 69 today, I traveled across the 800-yard valley to Kunishi Ridge. In 1945, when the ridge was filled with Japanese defensive positions, this trip could only be made safely by riding in a tank. I got out of my car and stood on the ridge looking down at Hill 69. It was easy to understand the accuracy of the anti-tank gunners. The school stood out sharply. There was no way those of us on top of '69' could hide from the sharpshooters on Kunishi Ridge. I found a faded red sign which proclaimed to the world in English and Japanese that this was an area in which gun hunting was prohibited!! How times change.

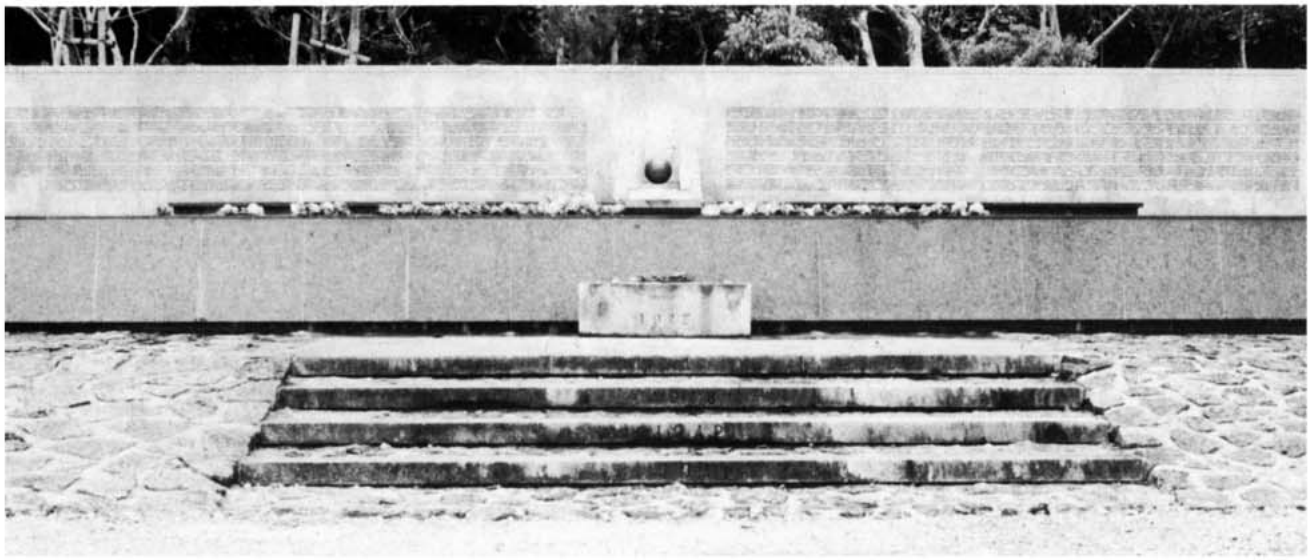
I got back into my car and traveled to Mabuni where the Japanese have developed a multi-acre memorial park dedicated to their fallen warriors. Soldiers from almost every one of Japan's forty-seven Prefectures had fought and died on Okinawa. Each Prefecture has raised a memorial to its own. Hundreds of Japanese tourists were placing wooden sticks at the stone memorials. Many were crying. I felt out of place. I also felt anger. My friends had died here too and there were no memorials to them! I did not linger at Mabuni.

As my departing 747 lifted into the sky and banked into a slow turn I could see the long green lines of Kakazu, Urasoe-Mura and Wana Ridges. They were surrounded by a sea of white concrete buildings.

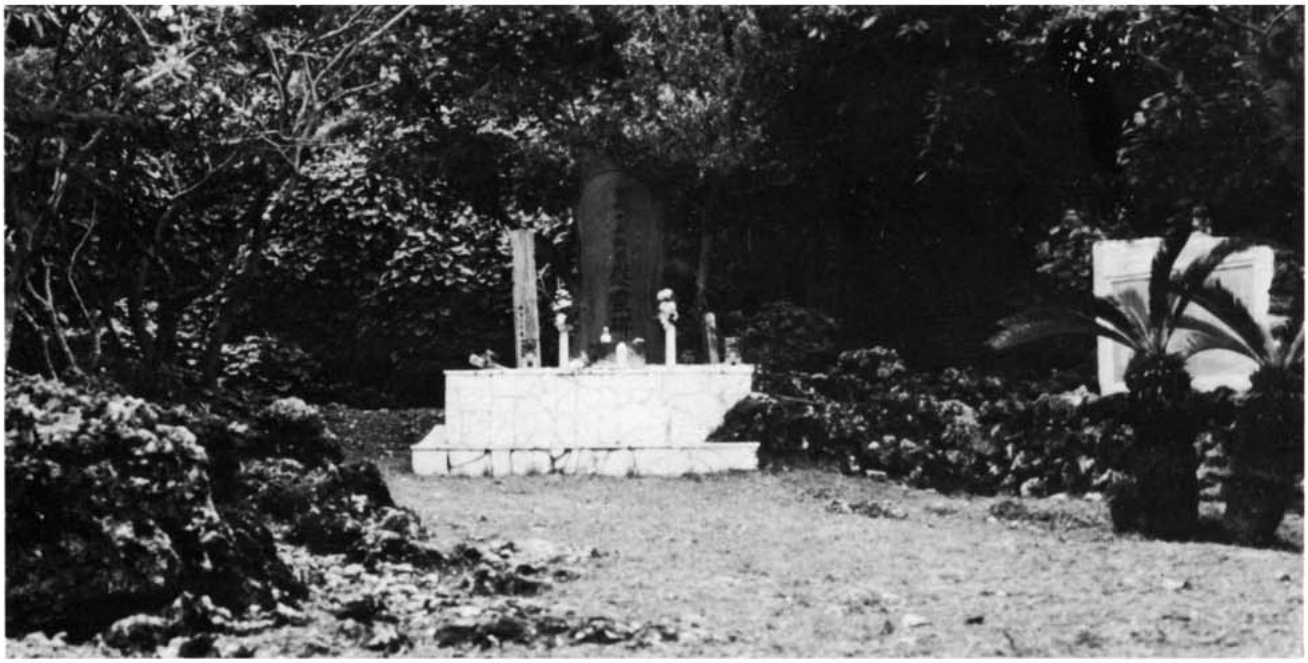
Tiny cars hurried in all directions. Yellow back-hoes continued their unending task of gouging holes in the coral clay so that the tireless farmers could plant the hundreds of thousands of rows of sugar cane which cover every available inch of unoccupied soil.

I knew then that Okinawa would remain forever in my mind as two separate places. The contrast between the stinking, slimy, vermin-covered, life-threatening garbage pit of 1945 and the highly developed and modernized island of 1983 was too great to permit integration. Even the Okinawans had changed from a docile, frightened, shoeless peasantry to a white collar, computerized, industrious population which concentrates on making money and living well, with an air conditioner in every house and a Toyota in every garage. They have become Americanized.

I don't think I will ever go back again. Only time will tell whether my nightmares will stop. 'Delayed stress syndrome' is not unique to Vietnam veterans. They just put a name to it.



Each prefecture of Japan has its own memorial in the Okinawa War Memorial Park at Mabuni. (A Japanese prefecture can vary greatly in size from the tiny 716-square-mile Osaka to the 30,314-square-mile giant of Hokkaido; from the 11½ million people of Tokyo Prefecture to the 500,000 of Tottori.) *Above:* Memorial to the 2,637 soldiers (individual names are listed) of the Hyogo Prefecture who died on Okinawa. *Below left:* Toyama Prefecture — 631 killed. *Below right* Gifu — 746.



This memorial stands to the memory of the soldiers of the Japanese 62nd Division.

Above left: **The tragedy of war. At Kenjo No, quite close to Mabuni, several hundred Okinawans were using this cave as a shelter. The Americans, thinking they were Japanese soldiers, blew up the entrance.** *Above right:* **Memorial to the entombed.**

The Memorial Peace Park at Mabuni sited on one of the bloodiest battlefields of the Second World War.

This towering monument contains a 60-foot-high Buddha — peaceful music from a taped chorus matches its impressiveness.

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